

THE 50 BEST SONGS & 20 BEST ALBUMS OF 2010

Issue 1120/1121 >> December 23, 2010-
January 6, 2011 >> \$5.99

Rolling Stone

THE LOST LENNON TAPES

Three days before he died, John Lennon talked with Rolling Stone for nine hours. For the first time, we present this extraordinary interview

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JOHN'S LAST DAYS

An Intimate Remembrance
BY YOKO ONO

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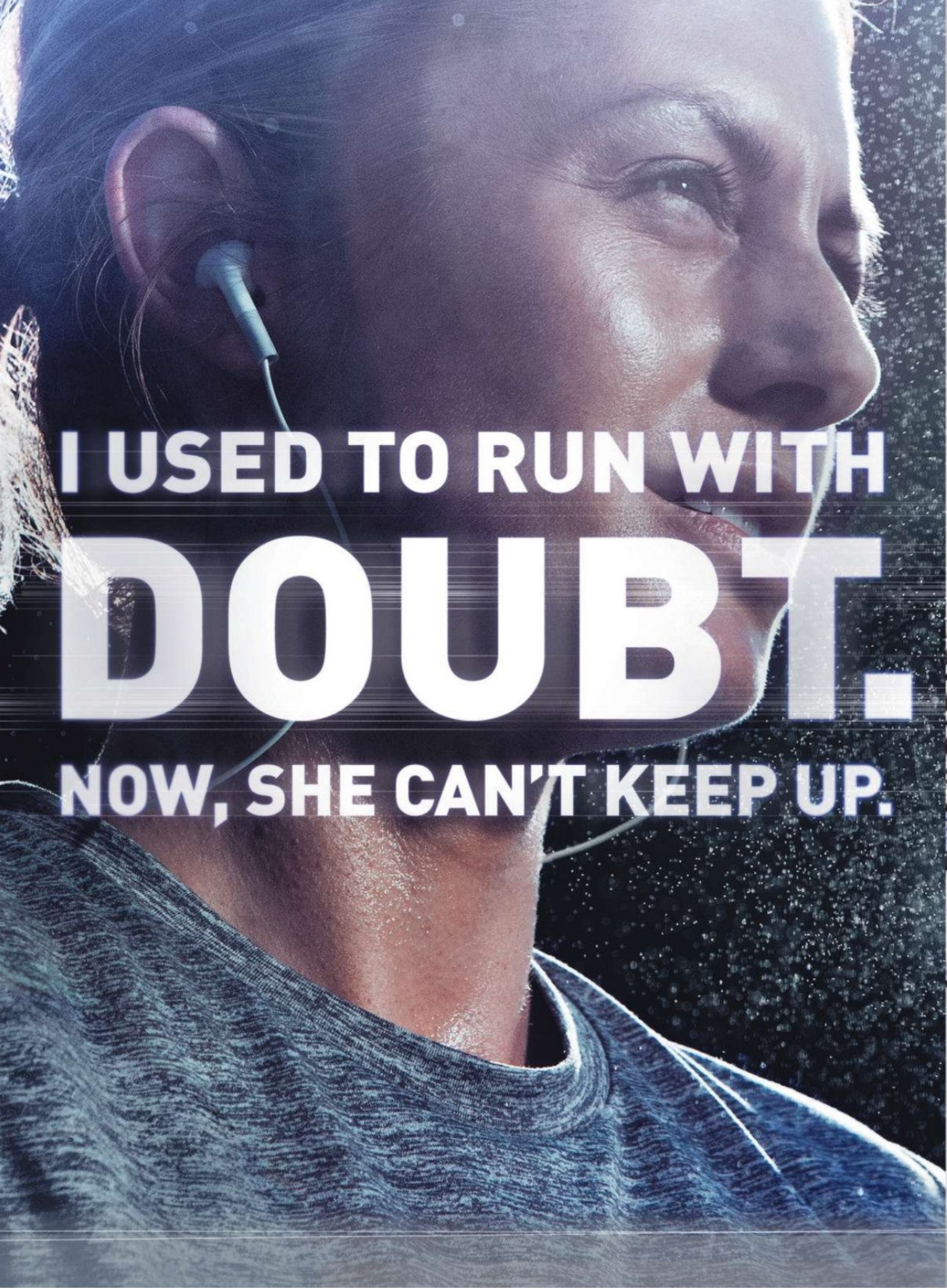
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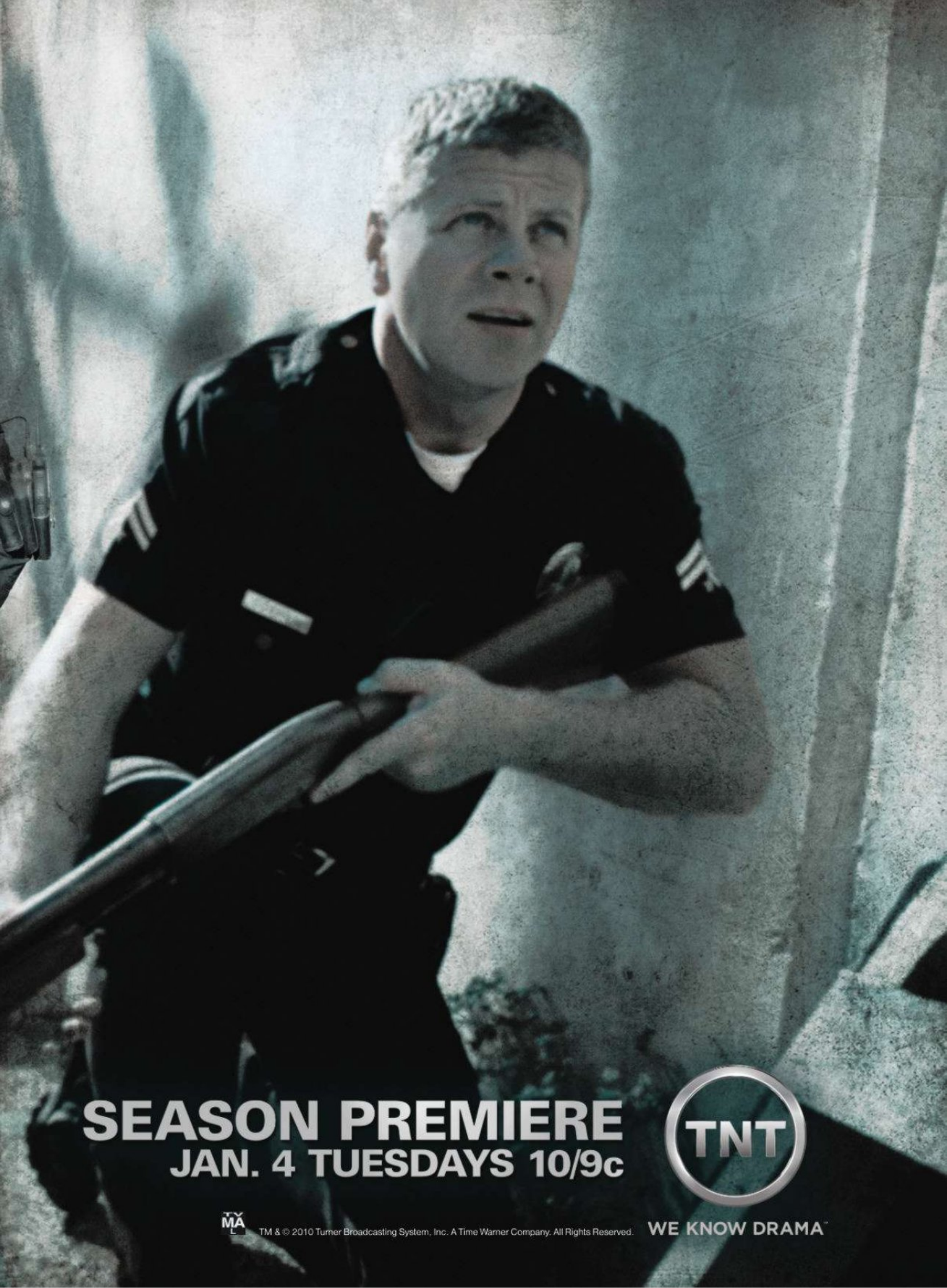


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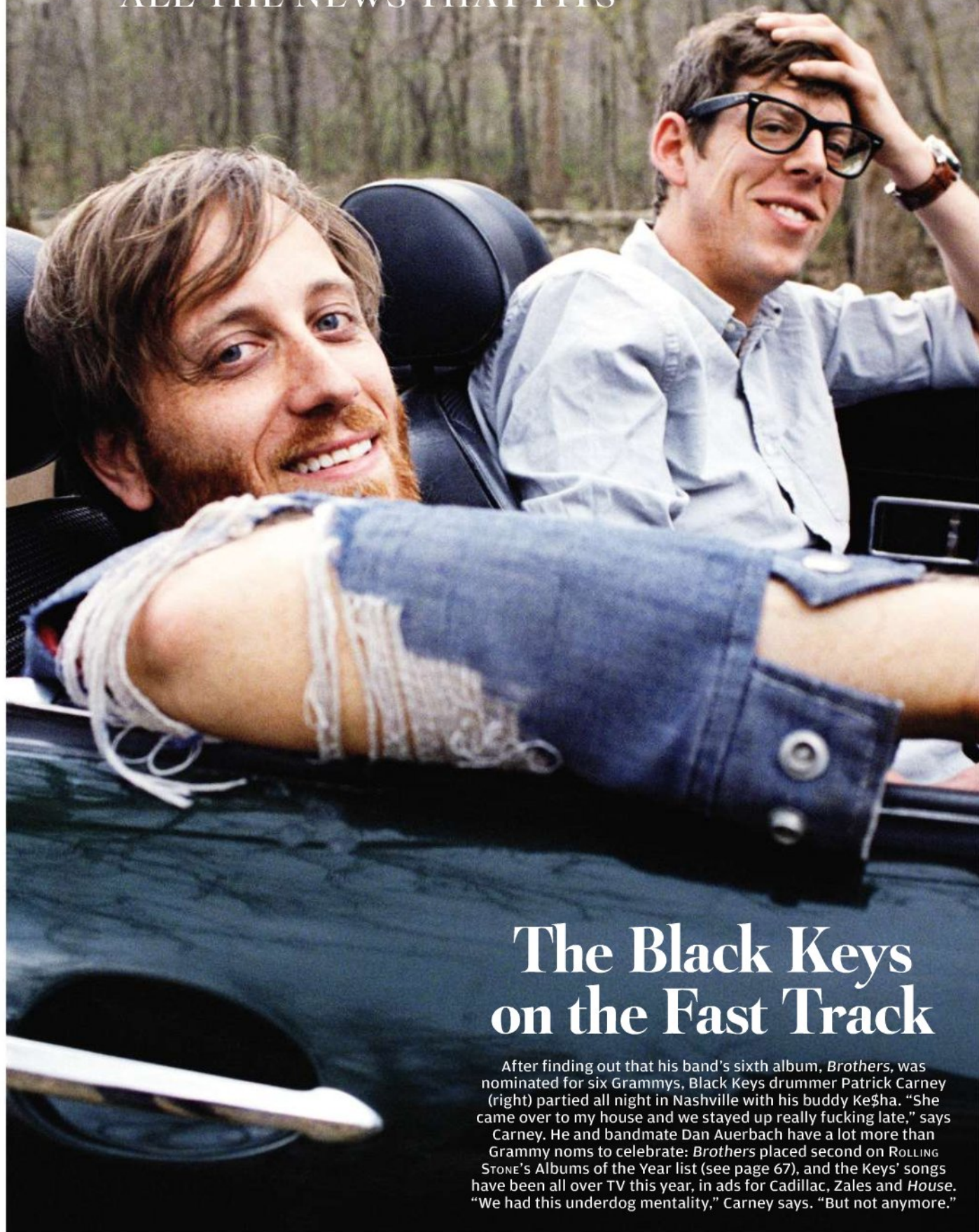
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"ALL THE NEWS THAT FITS"

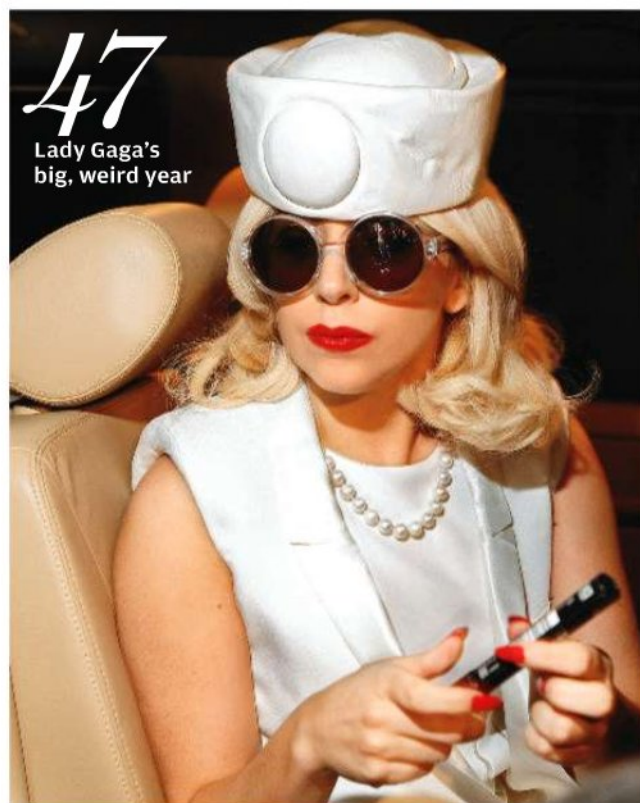


The Black Keys on the Fast Track

After finding out that his band's sixth album, *Brothers*, was nominated for six Grammys, Black Keys drummer Patrick Carney (right) partied all night in Nashville with his buddy Ke\$ha. "She came over to my house and we stayed up really fucking late," says Carney. He and bandmate Dan Auerbach have a lot more than Grammy noms to celebrate: *Brothers* placed second on ROLLING STONE's Albums of the Year list (see page 67), and the Keys' songs have been all over TV this year, in ads for Cadillac, Zales and *House*. "We had this underdog mentality," Carney says. "But not anymore."

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ON THE COVER John Lennon photographed in New York on December 8th, 1980, by Annie Leibovitz.

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Lennon: 1974



Lennon: 10 Hidden Classics

ROLLING STONE senior writer David Fricke picks 10 great overlooked John Lennon songs, from his *Rolling Stones Rock and Roll Circus* performance of "Yer Blues" with Keith Richards, Eric Clapton and

Mitch Mitchell to the gorgeous ballad "Bless You," from the 1986 posthumous album, *Menlove Avenue*. Plus: photos of John Lennon and Yoko Ono in New York from the last five years of his life.

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BEST OF 2010

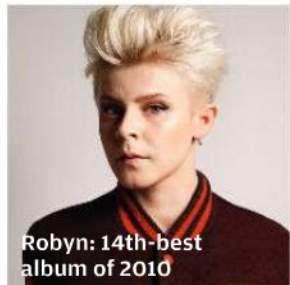
More Albums of the Year

Online exclusive: an expanded list of ROLLING STONE's favorite records of 2010. Plus: the year in rock photos.

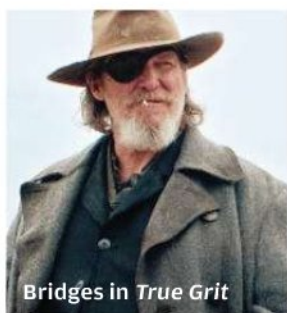
GALLERY

Jeff Bridges: The Dude Through the Years

As Bridges hits theaters in both *Tron: Legacy* and *True Grit*, Peter Travers looks back at his most memorable roles, from *The Big Lebowski* to *Crazy Heart*.



Robyn: 14th-best album of 2010



Bridges in *True Grit*

VIDEO

Live at ROLLING STONE: Tennis and the Goo Goo Dolls

Live acoustic performances in our offices from prep-rock duo Tennis and John Rzeznik and crew.

GALLERY

Ecofriendly Rockers: Who's the Most Green?

Watch that tour-bus exhaust: The most environmentally conscious musicians, from Jack Johnson to Dave Matthews.

LIVE REVIEWS

Prince and Paul McCartney in Concert

Prince brings his Welcome 2 America Tour to New York's Madison Square Garden, and McCartney plays the Apollo Theater.

PLAYLISTS

Rockers Pick Their Favorite Tunes

Next up: Ray LaMontagne on the Band songs that inspired him, and Sean Lennon on the Beach Boys.



Prince

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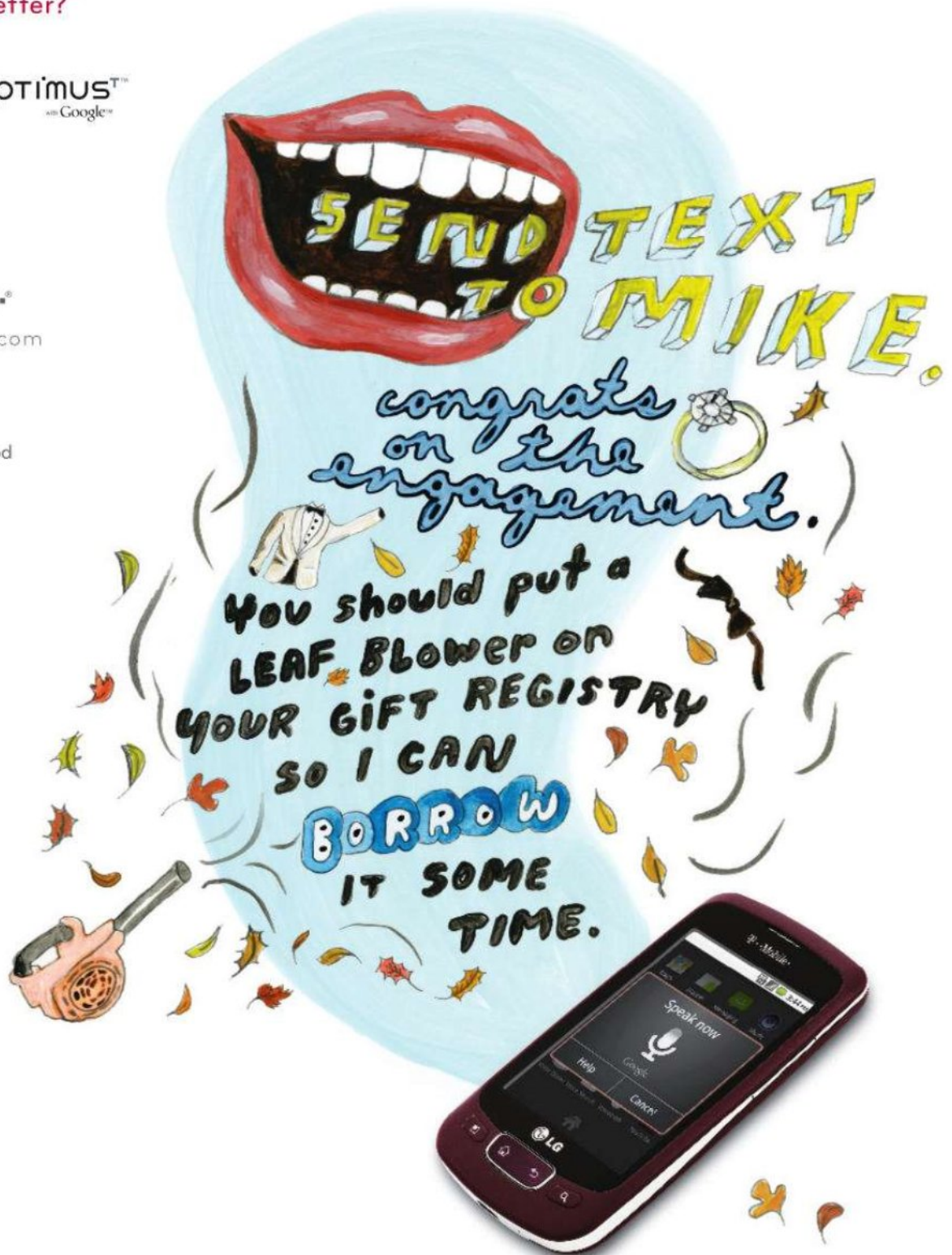


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Lennon Remembered

THIRTY YEARS AGO THIS WEEK, ON December 8th, 1980, John Lennon was murdered in New York. He was emerging from five years of seclusion after the release of *Double Fantasy*, the masterpiece he had just finished recording with his wife, Yoko Ono. In my lifetime, the only comparable event was the assassination of John F. Kennedy.

Lennon's death hit particularly hard at *ROLLING STONE*. John had shared many of his final hours with us as we were preparing a cover story to celebrate his return to public life. Three days earlier, our reporter, Jonathan Cott, the only person besides me whose name has appeared on the masthead since our first issue in 1967, had interviewed John for more than nine hours. When Jonathan, who had known John and Yoko for years, showed up at their apartment in the Dakota that evening, John seemed nervous. "Don't worry, it's just Jonathan," Yoko told John. "It's OK." And with that, they began.

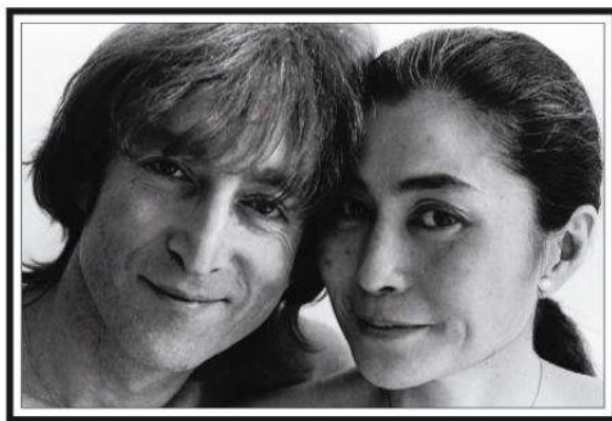
The conversation was a wide-ranging journey through John's thoughts and dreams. As the talk extended deep into the night, John invited Jonathan to join him and Yoko at the Record Plant to hear some of the new music they were creating.

"He was the same guy he was before," Cott recalls. "A joyous, vibrant, subversive, acerbic, funny, always inspiring, fearless guy. He hadn't lost it or become bitter or cynical. He never gave up." John's last words to Jonathan, as he escorted him to the elevator at 4 a.m., said it all: "I love her and we're together."

Two days later, Annie Leibovitz, our chief photographer at the time, made her trek to the Dakota to shoot the cover. She created one of the 20th century's most unforgettable images: a naked Lennon embracing a clothed Ono – named in 2005 by the American Society

of Magazine Editors as the greatest cover of the past 40 years. When John and Yoko saw the photo, they told her, "You've captured our relationship exactly." What you saw in the photo was the real John – open, daring, vulnerable, warmhearted. Nobody could have guessed it would be our final glimpse of him, or that his long conversation with *ROLLING STONE* would turn out to be his goodbye to the world. Although John did a radio interview on the day of his murder, his talk with Jonathan constituted the last time he spoke in-depth to a reporter before the tragedy.

When John was killed, our plans for a celebratory profile of a reinvigorated artist turned into a mournful tribute. Jonathan listened to his two interview tapes, pulled out a few quotes for his story, and stashed the tapes in a closet, where they sat for nearly three decades – until he discovered them, held together by a decaying rubber band, earlier this year. It seemed appropriate on the 30th anniversary of John's



John Lennon and Yoko Ono on November 26th, 1980

death to present the interview in full, along with a portfolio of photographs from Annie's sessions. Some appear here in print for the first time, among them a more intense shot of John and Yoko embracing.

We also asked Yoko to tell us about the final hours of John's life. Her reminiscence, "John's Last Days," is the first time she has written about that period, discussing everything from the making of *Double Fantasy* to their final intimate moments together. Both pieces remind us of how much John left behind, from his groundbreaking music to his and Yoko's ongoing dedication to the cause of world peace. His life continues to transform the world and make it a better place in ways that none of us, not even John, could have imagined. But then, that is exactly what John spent his life trying to tell us: Imagine.

—JANN S. WENNER
New York, December 3rd, 2010



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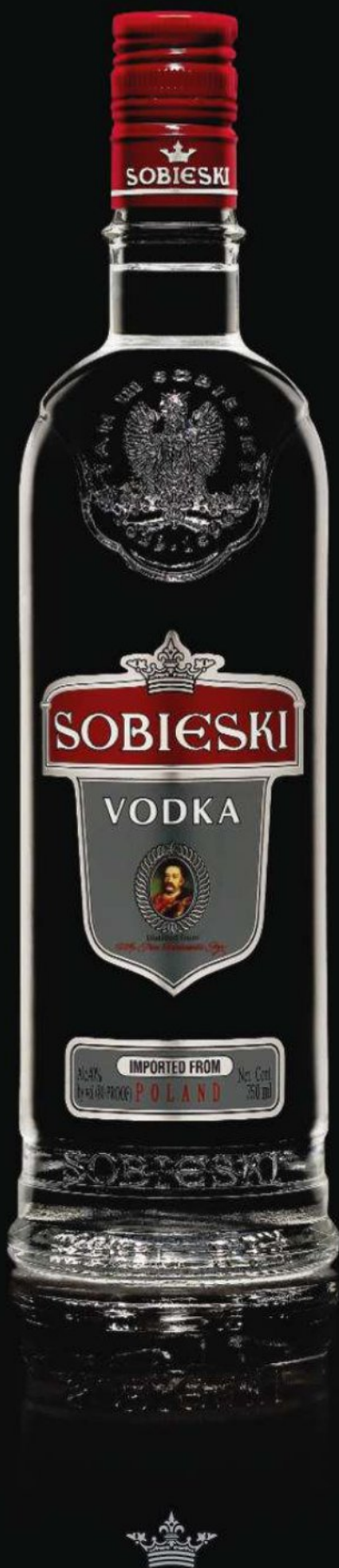


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{ Love Letters & Advice }



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The Comeback

IT WAS REFRESHING TO read the article on Eminem ["Eminem: The Road Back From Hell," RS 1118]. So many famous people end up in the press for all the wrong they've done that it's nice to read about someone's recovery for a change.

Shiela Kenning
Fort Lewis, WA

THE EMINEM COVER IS stunning; beautifully composed and artfully crafted with great sensitivity. My deepest compliments to Mark Seliger. At some point, I'll stop staring long enough to read the article!

Coreen Steinbach
Syracuse, NY

ALTHOUGH I DON'T LIKE the majority of Eminem's material, the interview by Josh Eells was so compelling and well-executed that Mathers doesn't come off as just another pop cliché or self-pitying has-been. He's doing what he needs to do in his personal life to be productive and take care of his kids, and that's OK with me. I may even go buy one of his records.

Keith Austin, Lafayette, IN

GREAT ARTICLES ON Eminem, Phil Collins and Bruce Springsteen alongside stories about the foreclosure crisis and the GOP? Now *that's* how you're sup-

posed to do it. This was the best issue in years.

Craig Comstock
Via the Internet

The Big Fraud

THANKS FOR ANOTHER brilliant article from Matt Taibbi ["Invasion of the Home Snatchers," RS 1118]. As a homeowner struggling to keep her house, I cannot begin to express how much this article means to me. It should be required reading for every member of Congress.

Sue Adams, via the Internet

TAIBBI'S IMPLIED ARGUMENT is that paperwork violations by banks should get delinquent borrowers off the hook. But most of the alleged fraud he describes was fraud against investors, not borrowers. If borrowers who freely entered into loans are allowed to shirk their obligations, it won't be banks that are hurt as much as investors, including middle-class families served by the pensions that hold the mortgages.

John Berlau
Competitive Enterprise
Institute, Washington, DC

Taibbi responds: The fraud was twofold. Investors were swindled into buying crap securities, and homeowners were swindled into buying overvalued properties that became albatrosses after the Ponzi scheme collapsed. It's lunacy to say that allowing the courts to greenlight such systematic fraud – on behalf of the banks who committed these crimes – is a solution to anything.

Great Debate

THANK YOU FOR INCLUDING Matt Taibbi in your recent post-election roundtable ["The GOP Come-

back," RS 1118]. While David Gergen and Peter Hart provide quality insights, Taibbi has his finger on a pulse that beats closer to the reality in Washington and across the country. His is an irreplaceable voice.

Joshua Pringle, New York

Phil's Genesis

IT'S TOO BAD THAT PHIL Collins focuses too much on the negative ["Phil Collins' Last Stand," RS 1118]. Phil's music touched the hearts of millions and helped define a generation. That's the legacy Collins should be proud of and hang on to.

Scott Oliver, Boston

PHIL, SNAP OUT OF IT. Dude! You're Phil "Fucking" Collins. Those idiots in Oasis should be doing your yardwork.

Dustin Lafferty, Tacoma, WA

THANKS FOR HAVING THE balls to run an article on Phil Collins. Phil – you have nothing to apologize for, sir! Your music with and without Genesis is the soundtrack to many peoples' lives. And let's not forget that you have influenced and inspired more drummers than you could know, myself included. Fuck anyone who doesn't understand that. From a musician's standpoint, you are the cream of the crop.

Ed Toth
The Doobie Brothers
Nashville

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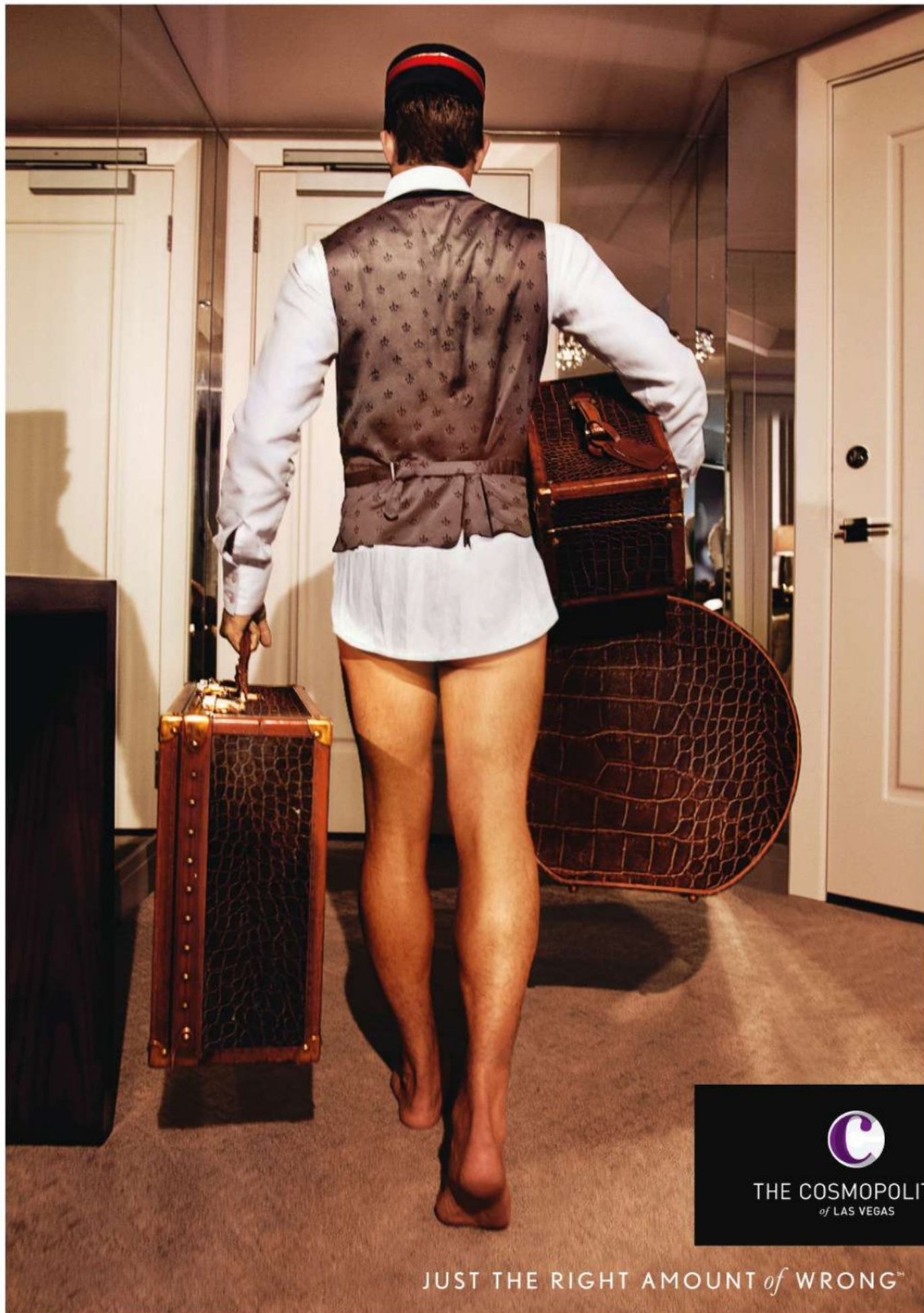
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A black and white photograph of a bald man with a serious expression, wearing a dark leather jacket over a dark shirt. He is holding a small shot glass in his right hand, which has a ring on the ring finger. The background is dark and moody.

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Rock & Roll

RUN THIS TOWN The Edge, Jay-Z and Bono in Melbourne.



U2, Jay-Z Rock Down Under

WILL YOU WELCOME BACK ONTO THE STAGE, world heavyweight champion of hip-hop Jay-Z? Bono announced, inviting the opening act on the Australian and New Zealand leg of U2's monster 360° Tour to join the band for "Sunday Bloody Sunday" in Melbourne on De-

cember 1st. Emerging in a Bono-style military hat, Jigga added explosive new rhymes with bits of "Get Up, Stand Up." (Six days earlier, in Auckland, Jay-Z united with the band for the *October* obscurity "Scarlet.") "I love the idea of more crosstown traffic," Bono says. "Jay likes to be places no one else has been."

Paul Simon Peels Back the Years

"It takes me back to 'Still Crazy After All These Years,'" he says of new LP
By David Browne

WHEN PAUL SIMON began working on a new batch of songs early last year, he flashed back to his previous disc, 2006's *Surprise*—and realized his favorite part of that sonically dense collaboration with Brian Eno was one melodic chord sequence. "I said, 'That's the part I liked the best out of all of it,'" he re-

calls, "so maybe I'll go and do a thing I haven't done in 20-odd years, which is sit in a room and write."

Setting up in a cottage next to his house in Connecticut, Simon began crafting songs built around what he calls "interesting harmony and structure" instead of beats, as he's done for the past 25 years. Those songs will emerge in April, on Simon's 12th studio album, *So Beautiful Or So What*. "Since *Graceland*, I've always made the record based on either mak-

ing the tracks or the percussion first," he says. "This time, the stimuli was a guitar in my lap. That takes me back to 'Still Crazy After All These Years' or 'Something So Right,' those more complicated ballads."

Working with producer Phil Ramone, who recorded Simon's classic Seventies albums, he began casually cutting the songs in the cottage, which houses all of Simon's guitars and home-recording gear. The resulting "meticulous demos," in Simon's words, form a stand-

out disc that blends the emotional and musical directness of his early solo LPs with a surprising dose of social commentary. "Love and Hard Times" and "Questions for the Angels" are luminous story-songs about people searching for meaning in a confused world (the latter mentions Jay-Z); other tunes reference a nephew serving in Iraq (the deceptively bouncy single "Getting Ready for Christmas Day"), Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination (the jittery [Cont. on 24]

PAUL SIMON

[Cont. from 23] title track), and a Vietnam vet working at a car wash ("Rewrite"). "I don't set out with a message," Simon says. "It just comes out that way."

Throughout the album, the focus stays on Simon's intricate guitar chords and still-supple voice (at 69, he says he no longer smokes or drinks, and he even quit coffee). But in keeping with Simon's musical eclecticism, he and Ramone spent more than a year tinkering with the tracks with a small team of collaborators including longtime Simon guitarist Vincent Nguini and world-music percussionist Steve Shehan, who has worked with Bob Dylan and Peter Dinklage. Doyle Lawson and Quicksilver's Indian-gospel harmonies were added onto "Dazzling Blue." Elsewhere, Simon's wife, Edie Brickell, and teenage daughter Lulu contributed harmonies.

The lyrically and musically complex "Love and Hard Times," which opens with Simon's voice and piano and ends with a swelling string section, took more than a year to complete. Simon even dabbled in sampling for the first time, incorporating a bit of a Sonny Terry harmonica part in "Love Is Eternal Sacred Light." "From working with Paul in the past, we all got to learn that just because something is great at that moment doesn't mean it's going to last," Ramone says. "But what I love about working with Paul is that no doors are closed—none. Adventure is OK with him."

The album reminds Simon of his first, sparsely produced



HOMeward BOUND For the first time in decades, Simon just sat down with a guitar and wrote.

solo disc, 1972's *Paul Simon*, which has been rediscovered in indie-rock circles: Spoon and Grizzly Bear have both covered songs from it, and Vampire Weekend's Ezra Koenig just cut "Papa Hobo" for the soundtrack to an upcoming Uma Thurman film, *Ceremony*.

Grizzly Bear drummer Chris Bear, whose band joined Simon at a Brooklyn Academy of Music show in 2009, pitched in on the new LP with a few electronic drum parts. "It seems quite natural to me," Simon says about being embraced by the new generation of indie-rock acts. "There's always a fascination with returning to songwriting. In a way, my record sounds like an indie record."

Simon himself is now an indie act: After 30 years with Warner Bros., he self-financed the sessions for *So Beautiful* and then inked a deal with Concord Music Group. To promote the disc, Simon is gearing up for spring and summer shows that he hopes will include rarely heard songs such as "Peace Like a River" (from *Paul Simon*) and "Crazy Love Vol. II" (*Graceland*). In the meantime, Simon and Art Garfunkel's recently canceled summer tour is still off the table, due to Garfunkel's ongoing recovery from vocal-cord paresis. "I'd like to sing with Artie one more time, but that's down the road," Simon says. "I'm focused on this album and this band. It's my kind of rock & roll."

IN THE NEWS

Eminem leads Grammy nominations

The Detroit MC topped his giant comeback year with 10 Grammy nominations, including nods for Album, Record



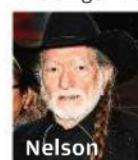
Eminem

and Song of the Year. Next in line, with seven, is newcomer Bruno Mars (based on his

collaborations with others, like Cee Lo Green's "Fuck You" and B.o.B's "Nothin' on You"). Lady Gaga, Lady Antebellum and Jay-Z are next up with six. The 53rd annual Grammy Awards will air on CBS on February 13th.

Willie Nelson busted for pot possession

Nelson was arrested on November 26th at a border-patrol checkpoint in Sierra Blanca, Texas, after agents seized six ounces of pot off his tour bus. Nelson, 77, is charged with a class-A misdemeanor, which carries a maximum of one year in jail and a \$4,000 fine. (It's his second drug-related arrest in four years.) The singer was traveling home

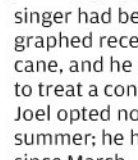


Nelson

from California, where he spent the Thanksgiving holiday, when agents searched his bus and also arrested two other passengers. Mickey Raphael, Nelson's longtime harmonica player, says, "He said he feels great—he lost six ounces." Texas criminal-defense attorney Dick DeGuerin, who recently represented Tom DeLay, questions the lawfulness of the search. "It needs to be contested," he says. "It's supposed to be a checkpoint only for aliens. . . . If you have long hair, if you're driving a van or if you look like a hippie, they do profiling."

Billy Joel recovering from hip replacement

Joel underwent double hip-replacement surgery in late November in New York. "Billy is at his Oyster Bay, New York, home and is feeling great," his publicist says. The 61-year-old



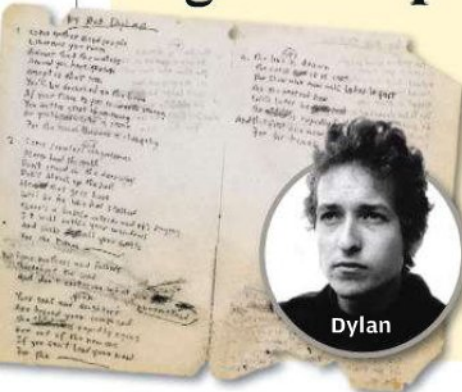
Joel

singer had been photographed recently using a cane, and he had the surgery to treat a congenital disorder. Joel opted not to tour last summer; he hasn't performed since March.

Big Bids Expected for Rare Dylan Lyrics

Sometime in late 1963, Bob Dylan jotted down the lyrics to "The Times They Are A-Changin'" on a sheet of white paper. Some 47 years later, Sotheby's is selling the item, estimating its value at \$200,000 to \$300,000. "No Dylan lyric has ever sold for this much," says Sotheby's VP Selby Kiffer, "but no Dylan lyric of this stature has ever come up for auction." Eve and Mac Mackenzie, who housed Dylan when he first arrived in New York, acquired the sheet, but 10 years ago their son Peter sold it to a private collector. Its existence was largely unknown until the sale of John Lennon's lyrics to "A Day in the Life" for \$1.2 million in June, which brought the collector to the auction house. "There could be more out there," says Kiffer. "The best way of flushing them out would be a big sale here."

ANDY GREENE



Dylan

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File Not Found: The Record Industry's Digital Storage Crisis

Vinyl and analog tapes last forever, but hard drives fail and digital formats change By David Browne

LAST YEAR, THE BEGGARS Banquet label unearthed the multitrack master recordings of the Cult's classic 1985 album, *Love*, for a planned deluxe edition. The LP was an early digital recording, and to the label's shock, one master was unplayable; the other contained only 80 percent of the album. "That's the problem with digital," says Steve Webbon, head archivist of the Beggars Group. "When it goes, it's just blank. It's gone."

Welcome to the digital nightmare. Until the 1980s, music was recorded on analog tapes that were stored in vaults and easily played back. In the digital era, that process has changed irrevocably. A new report issued by the Library of Congress calls digital formats "not inherently safe harbors of preservation," and raised red flags about how music collections are being stored. "There's a paradox," says Sam Brylawski, a former Library of Congress archivist. "We can record so easily now with digital recorders. But at the same time, the stuff is at greater risk than it used to be." Producer T Bone Burnett, who testified at a hearing on the topic, couldn't agree more: "Digital is a feeble storage medium."

Why does it matter? With the record industry battling shrinking sales, labels have been scouring their catalogs for new revenue streams: deluxe reissues, remixes and video-game and soundtrack licensing opportunities – all of which can require the multitrack masters (these contain all of a song's separate vocal and instrumental elements). For instance, this year's hit *Exile on Main Street* reissue, where the Rolling Stones recorded new material onto sessions from the 1970s, or the new "stripped down" version of John Lennon and Yoko Ono's *Double Fantasy* couldn't have happened without fully intact multitrack masters.

The great advantage of the digital medium – that it's always evolving – is also its downfall. Modern computers aren't always compatible with old formats. "Say you have a Word file on an old Mac OS and you want to retrieve it," says Paul West, a former archivist at Universal Music. "Look at the hoops you have to go through for that. Multiply that by an incredible factor to try to retrieve music."

Smash Mouth had to go rerecord parts of their 1999 hit "All Star" for a TV ad when the digital master was missing tracks. Engineers at EMI have discovered that drums and percussion effects on some Eighties recordings are gone. As a result, engineers are sometimes forced to reconstruct these effects

themselves. "You open a session even from 10 years ago, and it might have a plug-in that's not supported, so you don't have that effect anymore," says Greg Parkin, VP of archives at EMI. "Our guys are becoming detectives – it's a booming industry."

Hard drives, which became standard in the past decade, present their own problems. Label archivists tell horror stories about receiving hard drives that are blank or filled with unidentified files. "You'll get a drive with thousands of files on it," says Chris Lacinak of AudioVisual Preservation Solutions, which has helped preserve music for the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. "Imagine if all the songs in your iTunes library just said 'Track 1' or

'Track 2.' Ten years later, when you want to do a remix or collect outtakes – good luck."

When a multitrack digital tape is missing or inaccessible, the music isn't completely gone; it still exists on backup tapes or CDs. But it's the multitrack masters that soundtrack supervisors and video-game companies need for their projects. The Wallflowers wanted to license one of their songs to *Guitar Hero* – but discovered that the drum track, recorded on a separate file, couldn't be found. "If people can't figure out why a song isn't on *Guitar Hero*, there's a good chance it's because there's no way to revive the digital master file," says one industry source.

Unfortunately, future-proofing digital music isn't easy. The Library of Congress report recommended regularly migrating files to updated systems, a costly expense. (The library estimates \$187,500 for every 1,000 hours of audio.) Bob George of the ARChive of Contemporary Music, which has collected more than 2 million CDs, LPs and tapes of decades of pop music, says he won't be converting the library's collection to hard drives. "By the time we'd finish," he says, "there would be a new system for digitizing."

Labels are starting to take notice of these digital-archiving issues. Some keep their files backed up on servers in climate-controlled rooms. Others, like EMI and Universal, immediately convert files of new albums onto systems like Linear Tape-Open (LTO), a heavy-duty digital-tape format used by banks to back up their data, and store the tapes in vaults around the country. "Down the road, LTO may make way for something else," says EMI's Parkin. "The point is to make sure it's safe. With all these new revenue streams, we have to make sure we're packaging every single asset as best as possible for the future." ☛

Is Your Music Safe?

Five tips on preserving your digital collection

1 BACK IT UP, STUPID

It's common sense: Hard drives fail, so keep everything backed up on an external hard drive. In addition, keep the support drive away from your main computer. "If there's a fire in the room where you keep your computer," says music archivist West, "you've lost it all."

2 FUTURE-PROOF YOUR TUNES

With a terabyte of storage available for under \$75, there's no reason to compress files to low-quality MP3s anymore. Future-generation iPods will have plenty of room for audiophile-quality files, such as Apple Lossless.

3 CD-RS AREN'T SAFE

Avoid burning your music onto data CD-Rs or DVD-Rs. "They can last as little as three to five years if they're left in the sunlight and if it wasn't good quality to begin with," says former Library of Congress archivist Brylawski. Also: Not all CD-Rs are manufactured alike, and some deteriorate faster than others.

4 SAVE YOUR CDS

Don't toss your CD collection yet, as experts agree that most discs in your collection should last another 30 to 40 years. (Reports of "CD rot" haven't proved to be widespread.) "No panic is called for," says Jerry Hartke of Media Sciences, a data-storage consulting company. "We're not driving toward the edge of a cliff."

5 AIM FOR THE CLOUD

Consider backing up your music with a remote online "cloud" system. One service, Carbonite, offers unlimited backup for less than \$5 a month.



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PERFORMANCE

Kanye Celebrates New LP With Loose, VIP-Packed Club Gig

★★★★¹/₂

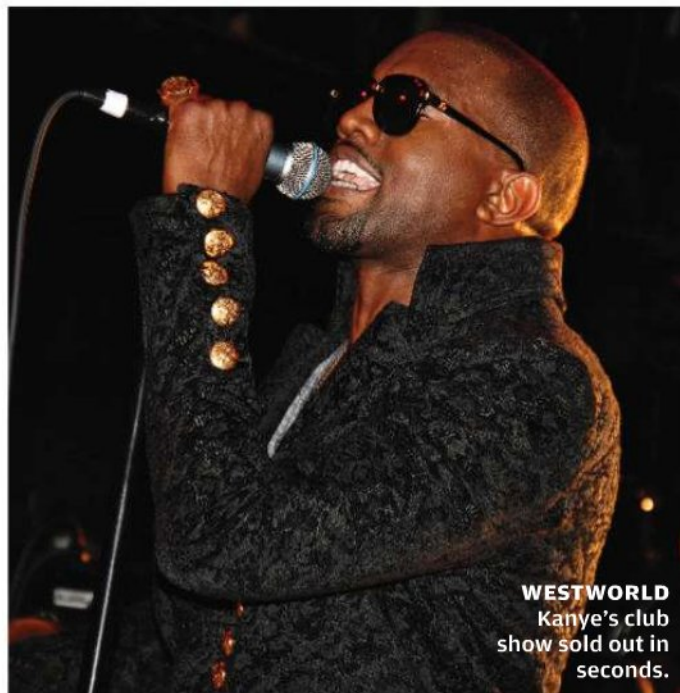
The Bowery Ballroom,
November 23rd, New York

KANYE WEST'S SURPRISE New York club show – to mark the release of *My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy* – sold out within seconds. It's not every day, after all, that you get to see the planet's hottest pop star not named Lady Gaga play a venue no doubt smaller than his bathtub.

By midnight, the line outside the club stretched for blocks. Inside, Aziz Ansari, Ivanka Trump, Spike Lee and Diddy packed in elbow to elbow with fans. West walked on about 1 a.m. in a military jacket that suggested Napoleon Bonaparte via Jean Paul Gaultier. Manning three samplers mounted on white columns, he launched into the punishing two-note groove of "Dark Fantasy."

The show was loose, as though we were watching West goof around at home. He indulged his inner art rocker, building dense sample collages and restructuring songs on the fly. The guest list included Nicki Minaj, Rick Ross and Bon Iver's Justin Vernon, serving up thickly Auto-Tuned vocals.

At times, the show slipped into chaos. West botched lyrics



WESTWORLD
Kanye's club
show sold out in
seconds.

and his guests missed cues. On the new album, "All of the Lights" is a hammering, brassy triumph, and it was triumphant here, too – until West cut it off halfway through, seemingly arbitrarily.

Such missteps did give the show an off-the-cuff rawness, nowhere in greater evidence than during West's closing 10-minute rant, which touched on George W. Bush (unfairly "villainized"), Taylor

Swift, and Matt Lauer's abusive interviewing techniques. In all, a tighter script would have helped: The errors made it hard to get swept away by any song for long. To be fair, the new album is full of ambitious music that's simply hard to pull off in a rock club. Often, though, West seemed guilty of a crime you'd never expect him to commit: giving his own songs short shrift.

JONAH WEINER

TOUR BRIEFS

Taylor Swift

May 27th–October 8th
Tickets: \$25 and up

Following up her mega-successful *Fearless* tour – which grossed \$64 million – the singer will hit 87 venues in 19 countries, including 53 U.S. shows in summer 2011. "I've been planning how to portray these songs in concert since they were originally written," says Swift. "The visual element to songs is one of my favorite ways to tell those stories."

She has big plans for at least one song: "'Speak Now' is about interrupting a wedding, and I'd like to interrupt a wedding onstage every night," Swift says. The U.S. run kicks off May 27th in Omaha, Nebraska, with stadium dates planned in Detroit, Pittsburgh, Boston, Philadelphia, Kansas City and Dallas.



Swift

James and Ben Taylor

February 8th–April 2nd
Tickets: \$74 and up

The father-son team have rarely played live together, but this winter they'll hit 20 U.S. college towns, trading vocals and playing each other's songs, backed by James' ace band. "I don't know any James Taylor songs I wouldn't love to play," says Ben, who is releasing a new album in 2011. "Refamiliarizing myself with his catalog has deepened my respect for him where I hadn't figured it could deepen. I am deeply psyched."

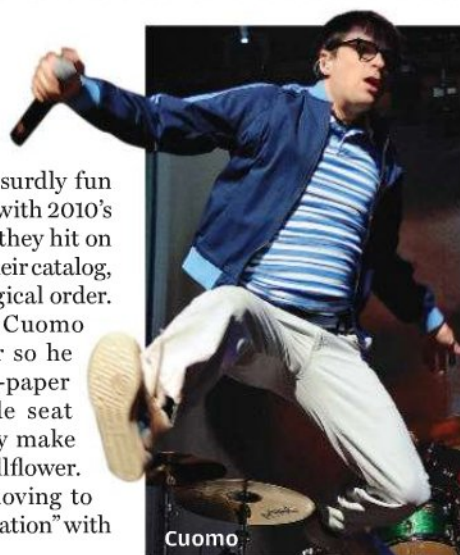
Weezer Revisit, Tear Through 'Pinkerton'

★★★★¹/₂

Gibson Amphitheatre,
November 27th, L.A.

FOURTEEN YEARS AFTER critics and fans deemed Weezer's second LP, 1996's *Pinkerton*, a piece of crap, the band has embraced commonly accepted revisionist thinking: It's a pop-punk masterpiece. So Weezer are out on a minitour, playing their 1993 debut one night, *Pinkerton* the next.

First came an absurdly fun hits set that started with 2010's "Memories," before they hit on almost every LP in their catalog, in reverse chronological order. Frontman Rivers Cuomo dropped his guitar so he could throw toilet-paper rolls, stand astride seat backs and generally make Bono look like a wallflower. He only stopped moving to duet on "Perfect Situation" with *Lost*'s Jorge Garcia.



Cuomo

Post-intermission, Weezer stayed firmly in 1996. What threw everybody back in the day – the power-pop hooks and wit being buried beneath raw guitar grunge and screamo vocals – couldn't have sounded more galvanizing now. Cuomo finished the show alone on acoustic guitar, singing the brutally honest kiss-off "Butterfly." Then, the album-art backdrop flew up, the rear stage doors opened wide and the outside world behind the stage became visible. It was a fitting climax for the album where rock's favorite wiseguy let us behind his curtain.

CHRIS WILLMAN

OOPS
SOMEONE FORGOT
TO BOOST

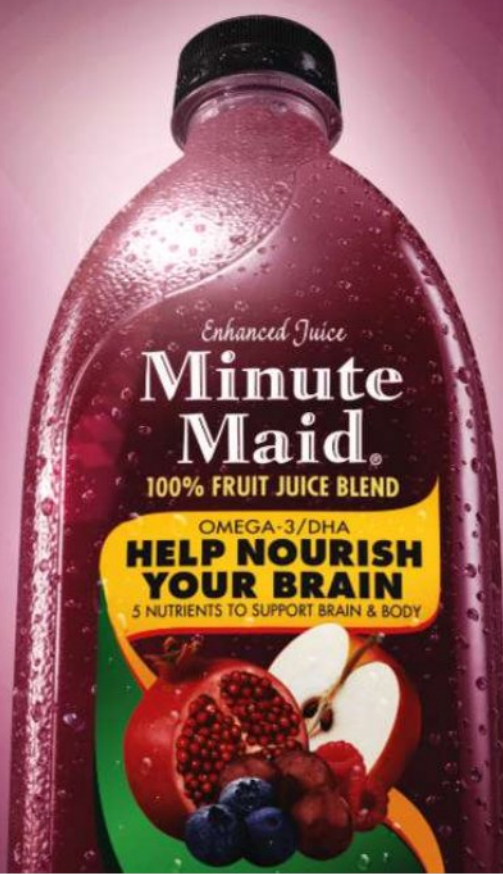


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IN THE STUDIO

Danger Mouse Re-creates 1960s Italian-Film Vibe With 'Rome'

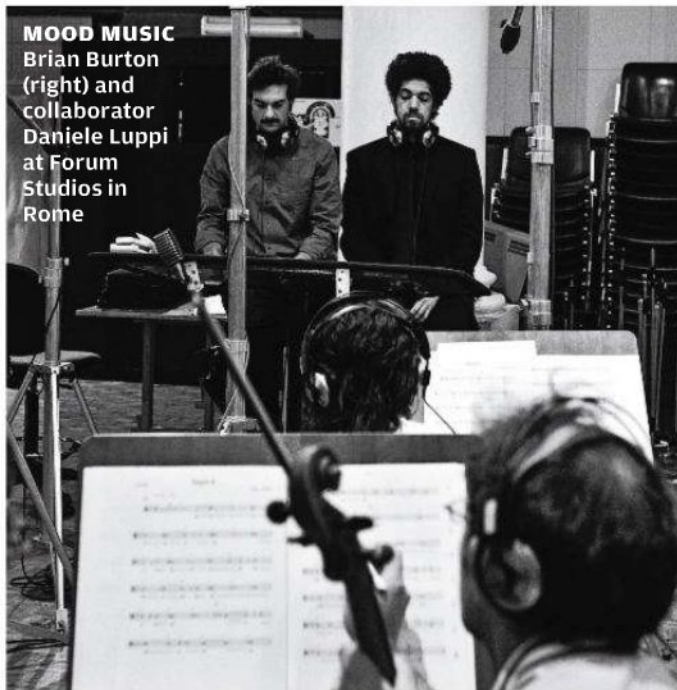
Album Rome
Due Out March

THIS HAS BEEN MY missing link," Brian Burton, the producer known as Danger Mouse, says of *Rome*, his collaboration with Italian composer Daniele Luppi, finally out next spring after five years of writing and recording. "I've talked about this with people for so long. Now I can say, 'See, this album does exist.'"

Rome is a mix of original songs and instrumental reveries steeped in the shadows and go-go instrumentation of Sixties and Seventies Italian-film music and principally recorded in the city of the title. The album features guest vocals by Jack White and Norah Jones, but the real stars are the studio musicians – local veterans who worked on the original soundtracks to Sergio Leone's spaghetti Westerns and the pulp-horror films of Dario Argento. Choirmaster Alessandro Alessandrini, for example, whistled the indelible riff in Ennio Morricone's score for Leone's 1964 hit *A Fistful of Dollars*.

"We did everything we could to capture those sounds and that spirit," says Luppi, 38, a native of Venice who, as a boy, first saw classic Italian films on state television. "I think we did our homework well." He

MOOD MUSIC
Brian Burton
(right) and
collaborator
Daniele Luppi
at Forum
Studios in
Rome



says that the celesta heard on *Rome* is the actual instrument used by the Italian band Goblin in Argento's 1975 film *Profondo Rosso*.

Burton and Luppi – who has done string and vocal arrangements for the former's Gnarlz Barkley and Broken Bells projects – began composing together in 2005 and went to Rome for sessions as finances and Burton's schedule allowed. A life-long devotee of Italian films, Burton, 33, has sampled vintage soundtracks in the past but admits that creating new music

in that idiom affected other albums he made while finishing *Rome*: "Listen to the Black Keys' record [2008's *Attack & Release*]. I'd just come back from one of my trips there."

Burton, who has been working with U2 on their next album, shies away from "imaginary soundtrack" in describing *Rome*. "I was looking for emotional quality in the songs," he insists. To Luppi, *Rome* is a reconstruction, "my perception of that era," he says. "This is the Rome in my head, not the one that is there now." **DAVID FRICKE**

STUDIO NOTES

Beyoncé prepping new record for 2011

The singer is planning a follow-up to 2008's *I Am... Sasha Fierce* for next year. "I'm mixing every type of genre that I love," she said. "It's not R&B. It's not typically pop. It's not rock. It's just everything I love all mixed together in my own little gumbo of music." According to the singer, the disc is influenced by Fela Kuti, the Stylistics, Lauryn Hill, Stevie Wonder and Michael Jackson's *Off the Wall*. She is teaming up again with producers Sean Garrett, Jim Jonsin and Ne-Yo, who recently said, "It's another direction for her. Nobody will be able to get in her lane after this."



The Jayhawks' original lineup reuniting for first album in 15 years

The two singer-songwriters – Gary Louris and Mark Olson – entered a Minneapolis studio in November to begin work on a new album. "We both feel that there is some business left undone," says Louris. "Our goal is to make the best Jayhawks album ever." They're aiming for a vibe similar to the warm, alt-country sound of their best Nineties material. "This is for a true fan who loves [1995's] *Tomorrow the Green Grass*," says Louris. "It's not a mirror image, but it has lots of the same elements." The band hopes to release the LP by the spring or early summer.

First Bright Eyes LP since 2007 out in February

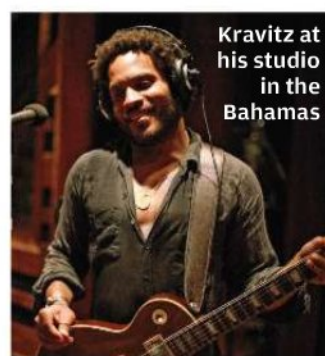
Conor Oberst and Co. will release *The People's Key*, recorded with longtime producer and band member Mike Mogis, on February 15th.

Funk and Sex Collide on New Lenny Kravitz LP

Album Black and White America
Due Out Spring

ON HIS 10TH ALBUM, Lenny Kravitz mixes earnest cuts about race in America with freaky party jams. "It's the most fun I've had in the studio in a long time," says Kravitz. "I just went where

the creative force was taking me." The title track is a funk odyssey inspired by the obstacles his parents overcame in a mixed-race marriage. "When they walked the streets, people would spit at them," he says. "They were in danger." And then there's "Come On Get It," a raw rocker that features some raunchy lyrics and ends with the sounds of two dogs hump-



Kravitz at
his studio
in the
Bahamas

ing. "There was definitely some canine action goin' on there," he says. "Just two little characters coming out of me that I

overdubbed on there. It's just nasty."

Kravitz credits the loose feel to working at his new home studio in the Bahamas. "I'm in a town of only 400 people," he says. "And I got to experience just being by myself." Other highlights include the *Rocky Horror*-style glam cut "Dance Around the Fire" and the lush soul song "Super Love." "I was definitely on a Quincy Jones kick with that one," he says. "My rock has always got some funk in it, and my funk always has some rock in it." **AUSTIN SCAGGS**

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PROFILE



WITCHY WOMAN
Welch grew up obsessed with the supernatural: "I was pretty odd," she says.

Spirit in the Night: Florence and the Machine's Spooky Pop

Vampire-loving U.K. singer hits Top 20, makes fans of U2, Kanye West

FLORANCE WELCH, THE 24-year-old redhead who performs under the name Florence and the Machine, seems to dwarf every stage she graces, even in inevitably bare feet. Which is why it's a little surprising to find her backstage before a recent New York gig, looking willowy, delicate and defiantly un-gigantic. She seems to have heard this before: "People always expect me to be, like, seven feet tall," she says, laughing. "But I'm actually quite normal-sized!"

Blame it on her pipes. Welch's voice is a force of nature – Olympian, mighty. Live, her lip-sync-free pyrotechnics blow bigger names out of the water (see the 2010 VMAs), while her debut, 2009's *Lungs* – with its mix of chamber-pop gems ("Dog Days Are Over") and Kate Bush-y gothic ballads ("My Boy Builds Coffins") – has earned her fans as diverse as Beyoncé and U2, who are bringing her on tour in 2011. And this month, she earned a Grammy nomination for Best New Artist.

Welch grew up in middle-class South London, a quiet,

book-loving kid who was enamored with witches (she once started a coven), vampires (she drew crosses on her bed to ward them off) and fantasy books. "I was pretty odd!" she says. She still likes sneaking into graveyards to "commune with the spirits," and she says that "places that are supposed to be scary I just find really peaceful." It's this blend of the innocent and the spooky that makes her songs so affecting.

"Places that are supposed to be scary I just find really peaceful."

As Welch says, "I'm still pretty weird – but at least now I can use it to my advantage."

Weirdness aside, being cool is practically encoded into her DNA. Her art-professor mom was a regular at Studio 54, and her dad is an ex-punk who used to frequent the same squat parties as Joe Strummer. She learned to sing Italian operas at age 11 and grew up listening to everything from Martha and the Vandellas to the Velvet Underground – but it wasn't until a stint at art school that

she decided to pursue singing full-time. She was signed by her now-manager in 2006, after Welch cornered her in the bathroom of a London pub.

Lungs draws on a variety of influences – from the Swiss artist Ugo Rondinone to rapper Lil Mama to Welch's breakup with her magazine-editor boyfriend. (They're back together now.) Her best songs, like the raucous domestic-violence allegory "Kiss With a Fist," are about the intersection between love and pain; Welch's trick is making that sound like a nice place to be.

After tonight's show – whose guest list includes two Strokes and roughly half the cast of *Gossip Girl* – she's backstage with a flute of champagne, singing Justin Bieber's "Baby" and then bouncing to Nicki Minaj in four-inch heels. Next week, she is heading back to London to start working on her second LP, which is shaping up to be "tougher-sounding." "I'm trying to keep things simple," she says with a sigh, "but we always end up putting a million things on." Then she laughs, and utters what could be her mission statement: "You're always sort of incorrigible yourself." **JOSH EELLS**

IN THE NEWS

Beatles digital releases a huge smash on iTunes

The Beatles sold more than 450,000 albums and 2 million individual songs worldwide in the first week that the band's music was available on iTunes. In the United States, the group sold 119,000 albums and 1.4 million songs, the bestselling album was *Abbey Road*, and the top-selling song was "Here Comes the Sun."

Allman Brothers Return to the Beacon

After a one-year absence, the Allmans will return to New York's Beacon Theatre in March, where they've hosted an annual residency since 1989. "We're back at home now," says **Gregg Allman**. "I don't think they'll ever put



Allman

us out again." The band was forced to relocate to make room for Cirque du Soleil's *Banana*

Shpeel, which ran for less than six weeks. James L. Dolan, chairman of Madison Square Garden, which runs the theater, said, "I told Gregg before – our apologies for last year. That won't happen again."

Jay-Z taking nightclub chain to U.S. airports

The rapper is planning to expand his 40/40 Club – which has outposts in New York and Atlantic City – to as many as 20 U.S. airports, giving travelers the chance to watch games "in an opulent lounge setting," according to a press release.

System of a Down to reunite in 2011

The L.A. metal band has booked 10 shows in Europe next spring, after a five-year hiatus. "We have no master plan," the group wrote on its website. "We are playing these shows simply because we want to play together again."

Billie Joe Armstrong Returning to 'Idiot'

After eight performances this fall, the **Green Day** frontman will reprise his role as



Armstrong

St. Jimmy in Broadway's *American Idiot* for 50 shows, beginning January 1st. With Armstrong in the cast in October, the show hit 93 percent of capacity, more than doubling sales from the previous week.

A close-up photograph of a hand with bright red, pointed fingernails holding a large, clear ice cube. The hand is positioned over a dark blue bottle of SKYY Vodka. A single drop of clear liquid is falling from the bottom of the ice cube onto the bottle's surface. The bottle has the word "SKYY" in large, white, stylized letters, with "VODKA" in smaller, white, outlined letters below it. The background is a solid, vibrant red.

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HOT LIST



1 COLDPLAY "Christmas Lights" video ▲

After ditching their first attempt at a 2010 holiday jam - "A Rush of Blood to the Latke" - Chris Martin and his magic rock elves settled on this weeping-in-your-egg nog anthem, with an awesomely Gilliam-ed out video. It hints at the direction of their in-progress LP: Think Bruce, Arcade Fire and a touch of Waka Flocka Flame.



2 CAKE "Sick of You" ▲

So we heard this hip little fuzzed-out tune on the radio, and we were, like, who's this cool new band? Maybe something called Bear Antler? Then we realized it was Cake! We know, right? Yo, Marcy Playground - step up!

3 SNOOP DOGG ► "Wet"

And we thought Ke\$ha perfected electroporn! Snoop's slinky ass-jiggler is the greatest ode to bodily fluids since "River Deep-Mountain High." Wait, that's not what that's about?



4 THE JOY FORMIDABLE "I Don't Want to See You Like This"

We've seen rock's future, and it's Welsh, blond and has a drummer so badass he makes Keith Moon sound like your mom playing Rock Band. (Sorry, ghost of Keith Moon! Please don't haunt us!)



5 DAFT PUNK "Derezzed"

Did Disney hackers mess with our robot bros' operating systems? Their *Tron* soundtrack is way more Hans Zimmer than Giorgio Moroder, but this relentless, sub-two-minute synth blast is a glimpse of what could have been.

IN THE NEWS

Britney Spears prepping new LP for 2011

"I'm almost done with my new album and it will be coming out this March," Spears wrote on her Twitter. "I AM IN L-O-V-E WITH IT!" The singer's as-yet-untitled seventh album reconnects her with pop hit-makers **Max Martin** and **Dr. Luke**, who wrote and produced some of her biggest singles. Spears' last record, *Circus*, came out in 2008 and has sold 1.7 million copies, according to Nielsen SoundScan.



The Clash sign on to official biopic

Bandmates **Mick Jones** and **Paul Simonon** have signed on to executive-produce the movie, which will focus on the making of the band's 1979 classic, *London Calling*. "Fans of the Clash all over the world have been waiting a long time to see their extraordinary story played out properly and accurately on the big screen," said producer Alison Owen. "We're happy that Mick and Paul are onboard to help steer the ship." It starts shooting next year.

Tupac biography coming in 2012

The first authorized biography of the late rapper will be released in 2012 by Simon & Schuster. Former *ROLLING STONE* contributor and *Real World* castmate **Kevin Powell** is writing the book. "I will present Tupac as the very whole and multilayered being he was," he said. "Our relationship began when I documented his journey [in the 1990s]. I will never forget being there at that Las Vegas hospital when Tupac's death was announced." **Afeni Shakur**, the late rapper's mother, said, "I trust him and his history of documenting my son's life, and I know he will do the book from his heart."



Aretha Franklin undergoes surgery in Detroit

Franklin - who has been in and out of the hospital since the summer - had surgery on December 2nd that was "highly successful," according to a statement. The singer, 68, has not revealed what she was being treated for. In November, after a brief hospital stay, Franklin canceled all of her scheduled shows.

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Will.i.am

The Black Eyed Peas leader on his best pickup lines, the Peas' clubby new LP and playing the 2011 Super Bowl

By Austin Scaggs

BLACK EYED PEAS FRONTMAN WILL.I.AM will be 36 next year, but he's partying like he never has before. "I like going out every night," he says. "I've been going to clubs since I was 15, and as I've gotten older, I go out even more." To that end, the Peas' new album, *The Beginning*, hits even harder, and will incite even more fist-pumping than last year's party-starting *The E.N.D.*, which racked up six Top 10 hits and sold 11 million copies worldwide. Picking up inspiration from checking out superstar DJs while on tour (Deadmau5 and Tiesto are two favorites), Will crafted more Euro-style grooves and uplifting hooks for the Peas' sixth LP, which includes an Auto-Tuned cover of *Dirty Dancing*'s "(I've Had) The Time of My Life" and a riff on 2 Live Crew's "Me So Horny." He says his target audience is the club kid who just turned 21. "There's a new 21-year-old every day, and the 21-year-old today is different than the 21-year-old when I was 21," says Will. "It's fascinating."

Your new LP kicks off with a remake of "(I've Had) The Time of My Life." What inspired that?

After every Black Eyed Peas show, I have an afterparty where I do my underground DJ sets. I do these Eighties and Nineties rock flips, like Guns n' Roses or Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit" or even Christopher Cross' "Ride Like the Wind." I make a beat for it and chop that up, and as it builds and peaks, I'll play the original. I just thought, "Oh, let's do 'Time of My Life.' Nobody expects that to happen at a dance spot." And it worked. When it dropped, it was hypnotic. I said, "Yo, we need to flip this for the Black Eyed Peas."

On "Light Up the Night," you talk about going into the club with everything "in my pocket." What do you carry to the club with you?

I'm not necessarily talking about my actual pants pocket. It's like, "There's nothing to worry about, I got it all in my pocket." "Are we going to have problems getting into this club?" "No, I've got it all in my pocket, don't trip." "Hey, who's paying for the drinks? Who's got the car? Who's got the drinks?" "I got it in my pocket."

Or, "Who's got the Ecstasy?"

No, I don't got that in my pocket [laughs]. I don't have girls in my pocket, either.

Not if your opening line is "Baby, let me love you long time," like you sing in "Love You Long Time."

[Laughs] No. I wish I was that brave. When it comes to being flirtatious, that's pretty much just in the songs. I wish I wasn't as shy as I am.

So she has to make the first move?

Usually. Or I ask Fergie to introduce us. "Yo, Ferg, start it off!"

You guys did a few dates with U2 last year. What did you learn from that experience?

I learned that it's important to keep the morale of the group healthy. Black Eyed Peas are used to being out 200 days a year. We learned that maybe that's not the best for the group's health. U2 are these guys whose careers have lasted longer than people's lives, but their longevity isn't because they've sold a bunch of records - it's because they're friends and they hang out.

Why do you think your 2007 solo album, "Songs About Girls," bombed so badly?

A bunch of things happened. One is that I'm not a solo act - I'm not supposed to be that guy.

Maybe 30 years from now. Also, at the time my solo record came out, Interscope Records was throwing bricks. You could give them a freakin' fireball and they couldn't light hay. There was no plan. Those motherfuckers was throwing up *briz-icks*. And lastly, at the time, my name wasn't Will.i.am; it was "Black Eyed Peas," and, every once in a while, Wyclef. "Yo, Wyclef!" they'd say. "Nigga, I ain't Wyclef!"

You've been outspoken in your disgust about the release of a posthumous Michael Jackson album. Why?

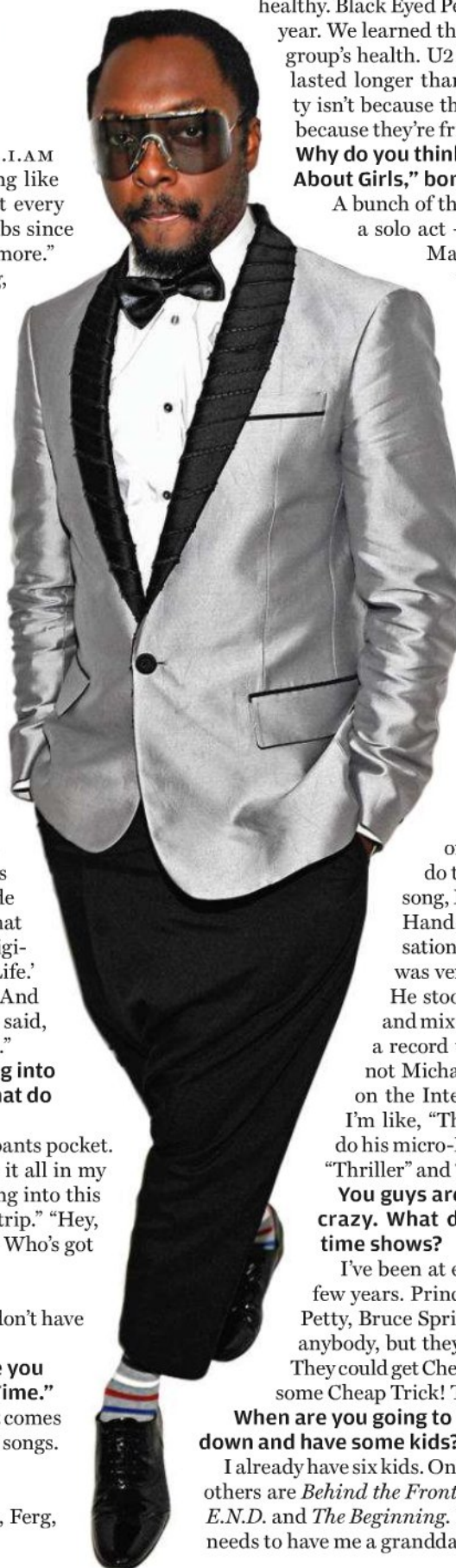
Hell, yeah, I feel that way, and I'll tell you why. A couple of months before Michael died, he called me on the phone really upset. [Imitating Jackson's voice] "Hey, it's Michael. Somebody leaked one of these songs. Why would they do that? Who does that?" I said, "What song, Mike?" "Some song called 'Hold My Hand.'" I swear to God I had this conversation with him. I knew this man, and he was very critical about every single detail. He stood in the studio himself, mastering and mixing everything. How can you release a record without that Michael Jackson? It's not Michael Jackson. I heard the song that's on the Internet now ["Breaking News"], and I'm like, "That ain't Mike." He wasn't there to do his micro-Michael-managing that he did with "Thriller" and "Billie Jean." It disgusts me.

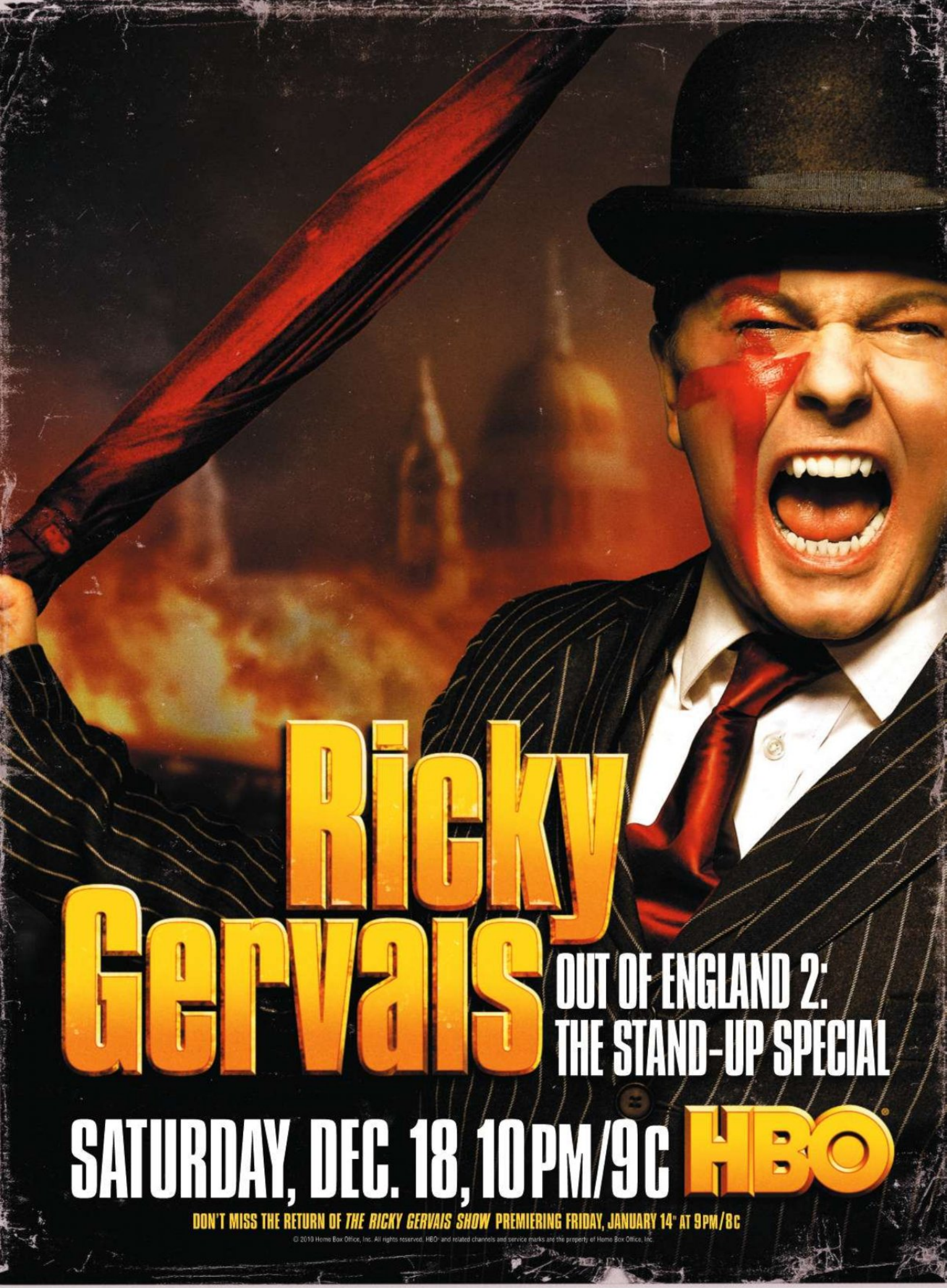
You guys are playing the Super Bowl - that's crazy. What do you think about recent half-time shows?

I've been at every single one of them in the last few years. Prince, Paul McCartney, the Who, Tom Petty, Bruce Springsteen . . . they could have picked anybody, but they picked us. What does that mean? They could get Cheap Trick, but they chose us. I love me some Cheap Trick! Those motherfuckers is dope.

When are you going to stop being such a player, settle down and have some kids?

I already have six kids. One's named *Bridging the Gap* and the others are *Behind the Front*, *Elephunk*, *Monkey Business*, *The E.N.D.* and *The Beginning*. I got six kids and shit! One of them needs to have me a granddaughter.





Ricky Gervais

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**CONAN AND THE
TEMPLE OF DOOM**
O'Brien goes head-
to-head with
Harrison Ford.

Conan's Sweet Revenge

He's back and better than ever, but late night, once ruled by kings, has become a very strange place **By Rob Sheffield**

CAN YOU BELIEVE THE whole Conan O'Brien vs. Jay Leno battle went down less than a year ago? It already seems like some ancient, primal, slaying-the-king legend. Jousting over who gets

Conan
Weeknights, 11 p.m., TBS

to host *The Tonight Show* on NBC – on some level, it's like a duel to see who can be the fastest delivery boy in the pony express, or top bugler in the U.S. cavalry. Now, while Jay gives *The Tonight Show* historically feeble ratings, Conan gets to kick back on TBS and crack, "I've dreamed of being a talk-show host on basic cable ever since I was 46!" As Bob Dylan used to sing, "There's no success like failure."

Conan's at the top of his game on TBS, with the cocky grin of the divorced dude who thought his life was over when he got dumped by the prom queen, except now he's having the time of his life with the stoner chick he met at the comic-book store. He's never looked friskier, even when he's doing self-deprecating gags

about how he landed on the network of *The Andy Griffith Show* and *Braves* games. Mocking the TBS slogan "Very Funny," Conan came up with a few variants: "Very Re-runny," "No, No, No... You're Thinking of TNT" and "Life Is Pain." But the most telling one for Conan? "Last Stop Before Animal Planet."

Conan's comeback has been the big TV story of 2010, no question. But he's returning to a late-night landscape where everything has changed. Late-night TV is wilder, freer and more crowded than ever. Every audience has its own *Tonight Show*. The party girls go for Chelsea Handler. (Her best line: "My teacher used to drill me – then he'd ask me questions.") The Latin audience has George Lopez. Mo'Nique's BET chat show remains one of the most comically chaotic spectacles around. Suddenly, late night looks a lot like America. Which means it's gotten really fucking weird.

How did it come to this? All the gory details are in Bill Carter's incredibly entertaining book *The War for Late Night*. He lets the network execs frame the story, but they still come off

as clueless hacks who pissed away one of the all-time great showbiz monopolies. Their anti-Conan meddling seems to have been a purely emotional reaction rather than a business decision: He made them feel old, and they hated it. One exec goes on record claiming he decided Conan was doomed his first week, because the musical guest was too young and edgy. The guest? Pearl Jam.

THE WATCH LIST

Skating With the Stars

Mondays, 8 p.m., ABC

What a shocker: a reality show with Vince Neil. Does anybody in Mötley Crüe ever say no to a camera? Still, Vince turns this skating contest into a theater of pain – especially since it looks like Bethenny Frankel could kick his ass.

Ice Quake

December 11th, 9 p.m., Syfy

Syfy's franchise of low-budget slam-bam disaster epics just can't be stopped, even if they'll never top *Sharktopus*. The latest, about a deadly Alaskan methane explosion, will have to do until *Mega Python vs. Gatoroid*. **R.S.**

With those guys calling the shots, it's no surprise Conan went down the tubes at NBC. The monopoly was always part of the point – there used to be nothing else on. As Leno says in Carter's book, "To me, the key to *The Tonight Show* is that you're at the airport and, oh look, it's on the TV over the bar." But, of course, there's one detail he left out: "And it's 1992."

In terms of total viewers, it's gone Leno, Letterman, Craig Ferguson, Jimmy Kimmel, Jon Stewart, Jimmy Fallon, Stephen Colbert, Carson Daly, Handler and Lopez. For younger viewers, the ones advertisers actually care about, Stewart averaged 1.3 million during October, with Leno and Letterman behind him at 1.2 million. Conan is topping Stewart so far, but the stakes have gotten so tiny that the networks have to compete on the same playing field as basic cable. There are no more late-night kings, because viewers have so many options – the king is dead, and it's anarchy after dark.

These ratings are small potatoes, and ABC's *Nightline* creams them all. But *The Tonight Show* and the other schmoozefests are still where the stars go to pimp their shit, and that isn't going to change. The godfather of them all is Johnny Carson. He did for 11:30 p.m. what Bugsy Siegel did for Vegas: He saw a nowhere town in the desert and decided to turn it into a city of dreams. Carson turned the insomniac ritual of monologue-couch-booze-sleep into the essence of Hollywood glitz, and for some reason, everybody still basically agrees that's how you sell stuff.

Given that half the country is out of work, it's not surprising that Conan built up so much goodwill just by getting axed. Clearly, many people out there – people who don't really give a rat's ass about *The Tonight Show* and probably never heard of Carson – identified with the story of a young American who pays his dues and keeps his bargains, but still gets shafted by the old clods on the 52nd floor. Now Conan's just happy to be one of the late-night hordes. And if it fails? Well, there's always Animal Planet. **CB**

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"There's the Tea Party. How about the Teapot Party?" —Willie Nelson, after his recent pot bust

Random Notes

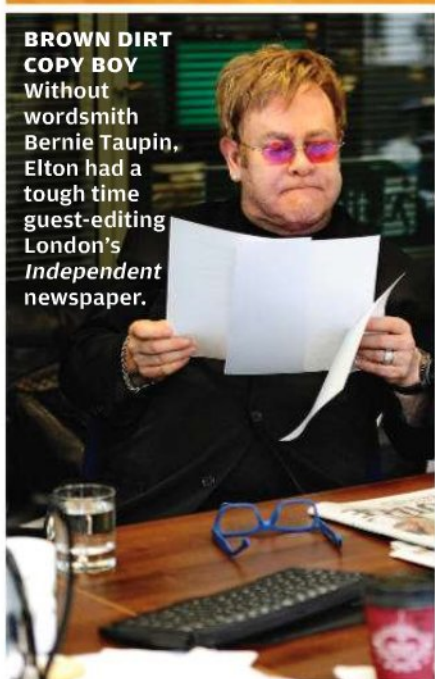
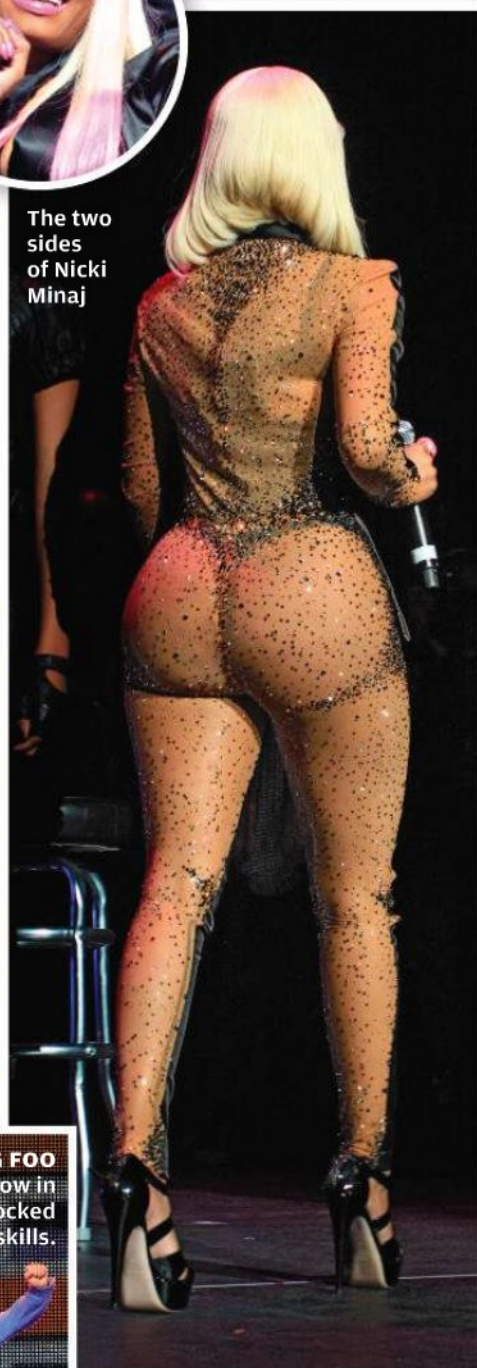


Queen of Cardio

Madonna headed south of the borderline, to Mexico City, for the opening of the first branch of her global fitness chain, Hard Candy. To break in the dance studio, Madge previewed the club's signature classes: Low-Impact Vogueing, Burning Up the Buns and Justify My Thighs.

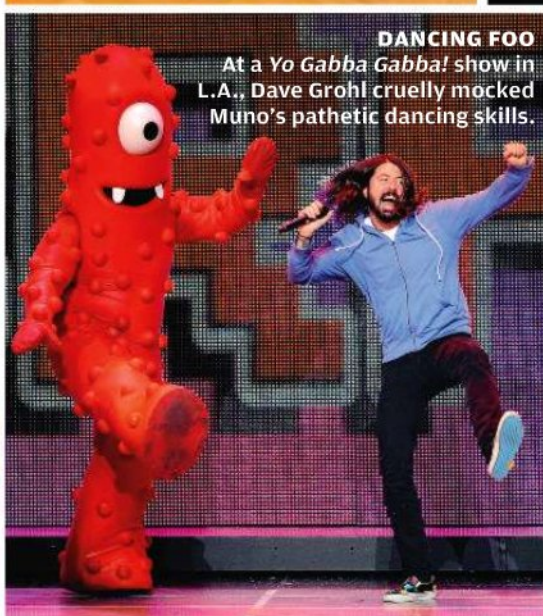


The two sides of Nicki Minaj



BROWN DIRT COPY BOY

Without wordsmith Bernie Taupin, Elton had a tough time guest-editing London's *Independent* newspaper.



DANCING FOO

At a *Yo Gabba Gabba!* show in L.A., Dave Grohl cruelly mocked Muno's pathetic dancing skills.

How Cheeky!

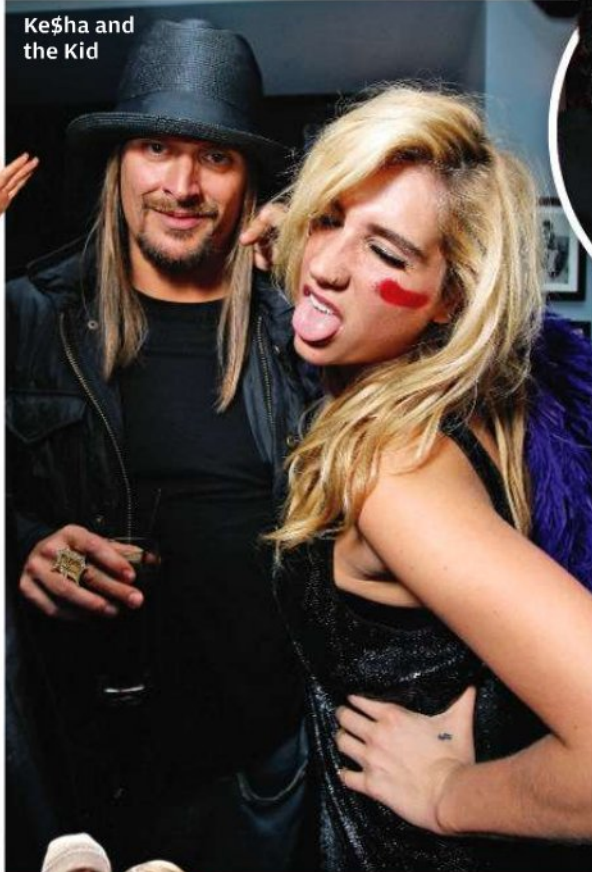
The legendary urban philosopher Sir Mix-a-Lot famously opined, "That butt was stuffed," and he may well have been talking about hip-hop's It girl, Nicki Minaj. The gluteally blessed rapper — whose first LP, *Pink Friday*, was a Number Two debut — celebrated by airing out her bedazzled badonkadonk at a Hot 97 Turkey Day gig in New York. Thank you, Lord, for such a bountiful Thanksgiving spread!

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: KEVIN MAZUR/WIREIMAGE; 2: KEVIN WINTER/GETTY IMAGES; DYLAN MARTINEZ/REUTERS/LANDOV



Avril Lavigne glides into RS/LA.

Ke\$ha and the Kid



Perry and Brand, still in the honeymoon phase

Stone's Soul Kitchen

It doesn't open until early 2011, but celebs christened RS/LA, ROLLING STONE's restaurant and lounge in Hollywood. At a post-American Music Awards shindig, Katy Perry and Russell Brand admired each other while Kid Rock feasted on mini burgers, short ribs and Ke\$ha flesh.



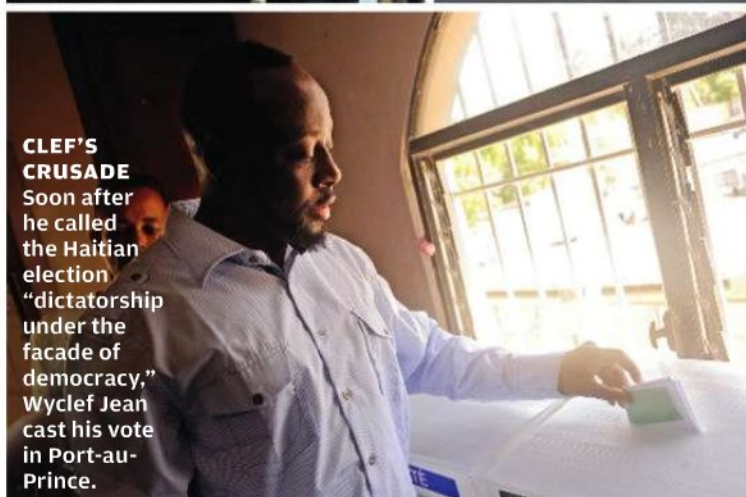
PEA PROBE
At LAX, Fergie opted for the body scan instead of letting TSA agents pat down her lovely lady lumps.



DEAR JAKE
As *Us Weekly* reported, Taylor Swift has a new schmoopy, Jake Gyllenhaal. In Brooklyn, he laughed along as she hummed their inevitable breakup song.



PLAYGROUND ATTRACTION
Angry-young-man-turned-peaceful-playground-dad Elvis Costello taught his boy how to swing in Manhattan. Pump it up, son!



CLEF'S CRUSADE
Soon after he called the Haitian election "dictatorship under the facade of democracy," Wyclef Jean cast his vote in Port-au-Prince.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: KEVAN BROOKS/ADMEDIA; ALEXANDRA WYMAN/WIREIMAGE; 2; LUIS JR AND RODRIGO GUERRA/RAMEY PHOTO; KEITH BEDFORD/REUTERS; XPOSUREPHOTOS.COM; 2; SWARBRICK/INFPOTO

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All-American Idiots

Each week, the ex-jocks on the NFL hype shows butcher the English language, laugh insanely and spout endless clichés By Matt Taibbi

THERE'S ONLY ONE JOB market left in recession-era America that's genuinely booming: the one for ex-NFL-players-turned-jabbering-TV-heads. There must be some kind of vast broadcast gladiator academy hidden in a basement at ESPN – where they teach guys like Qadry Ismail and Tim Hasselbeck and Derrick Brooks to tie grotesquely oversize Windsor knots and gesticulate wildly while screaming out nonsense phrases like “Michael Vick is emerging into a constant professional!” I’ve done an informal taxonomy of the countdown-show wildlife, and here are the results:

Football Night in America

The Rodney Harrison-Tony Dungy thing on NBC is the bizarrst of the hype shows – newly civilized violence expert (Harrison, the former Patriots safety once voted the dirtiest player in the league) takes on faux-mellow Christian platitudist (Dungy) while bemused broadcast cynic (Dan Patrick) looks on. With his earth-shaking pomposity and his google-eyed Christian Dudley Do-Right routine, Dungy is a great

and disgusting spectacle. He excoriated Rex Ryan for using the f-word in a *Hard Knocks* episode that he didn’t even watch (his Godly ears couldn’t take it), violating every unwritten rule of locker-room *omertà* and setting a new low in broadcast douchedom. Then, when Dungy said Brett Favre gave the Vikings the “best chance to win,” Harrison got so irrationally hot that he involuntarily pushed Patrick with a free hand – so far the reigning highlight of the NFL TV season.

The NFL Today Whether NFL pregame shows were designed to emulate American politics, or whether it was the other way around, the dramatic format of both TV spectacles used to be alike. You had your patriotic meathead guy (in politics, the Republican; in football, Dan Marino) against the sneering weenie-wiseass (the Democrat; Cris Collinsworth). But in recent years, CBS has broken the formula for the worse, and now dapper Dan sits alongside two other syntactically challenged white-jock archetypes in Boomer Esiason and Bill Cowher. For over an hour, this trio sit and perco-

late dully with good red-state values until host James Brown throws to Shannon Sharpe for the occasional 30 seconds of Exuberant Inner-City Incoherence. Note: Cowher’s increased grunting and facial hair recall John Lone’s defrosted Neanderthal character in *Iceman*.

Fox NFL Sunday When *The Wall Street Journal* measured the on-air laughing time of the Sunday pregame shows, it was

Manning’s Misery

We thought we had seen the last of the Peyton Manning Face. You remember it: The Greatest Quarterback of All Time launches one of his trademark rockets and watches as his receiver zigs instead of zags, then throws up his hands and raisin-scrunches his face in fatalistic disgust when the cornerback intercepts the ball. The Face conveys the sentiment “As Christ bore the cross, so too do I bear rookies at wideout and guard.” Since 2006, Manning had shelved his signature grimace, and its return can only mean something is afoot in the House of Colt. M.T.

discovered that the backslapping Fox crew of Terry Bradshaw, Howie Long, Jimmy Johnson, Michael Strahan and Curt Menefee laughed for two minutes and 22 seconds, or 11.6 percent of their total on-screen time (Bradshaw, amazingly, was credited with 2.5 seconds of laughter before anyone said anything). The meatheads-and-Sharpes crew at CBS, meanwhile, laughed for only 43 seconds that same week. That means the Fox crew is laughing three times more often than the competition. They need an injection of gravitas – maybe drape a corpse from the East River on the desk in front of Menefee, or put a dwarf with leprosy on Long’s lap – anything to stop the inane guffawing.

NFL GameDay Deion Sanders and ex-49ers coach Steve “Mooch” Mariucci on the NFL Network are the most touching TV love story since Beavis and Butt-Head – who doesn’t imagine Mariucci carefully laying out Prime Time’s seven-button suits and foot-wide Hermès ties for him every morning? This is the gold standard for NFL analysis, but ex-lineman Jamie Dukes’ “Put Up Your Dukes” segment (in which he mumbles jokes) is the most awesomely humorless act I’ve ever seen. If you put Sinbad, Carrot Top and Dane Cook in a hermetically sealed chamber and blasted them with gamma rays until they melted together into one 300-pound mass of blubbery, gastric-bypassed unfunny, you’d get Dukes.

Sunday Countdown Watching Chris Berman on ESPN now is like cuddling your 18-year-old dog whom you remember as that athletic pup that used to chase sticks all day long, but now drags across your kitchen floor with one paralyzed leg and stares up at you with his one unclouded eye begging you to put him out of his misery. Not since Leonard Nimoy has America seen a more hopeless prisoner in the cage of narrow celebrity. Additional note: Has anyone else noticed Mike Ditka’s increasing resemblance to post-Potsdam Stalin? ☐

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2010

THE YEAR IN MUSIC

From guitar heroes and chemical beats to Bieber and the Bed Intruder, it was all one beautiful dark twisted fantasy



TAYLOR SWIFT

She loved and lost! She writes hit songs about her celeb exes! She sells a million records her opening week! She has teardrops on her guitar! A star!



LADY GAGA

She wears a meat dress! She makes the stadiums roar! She busts out of jail with Beyoncé! She wears a nun's habit with duct tape on her nipples! A star!

Blonde on Blonde Ambition!

How the girl next door and the girl from outer space ruled the year

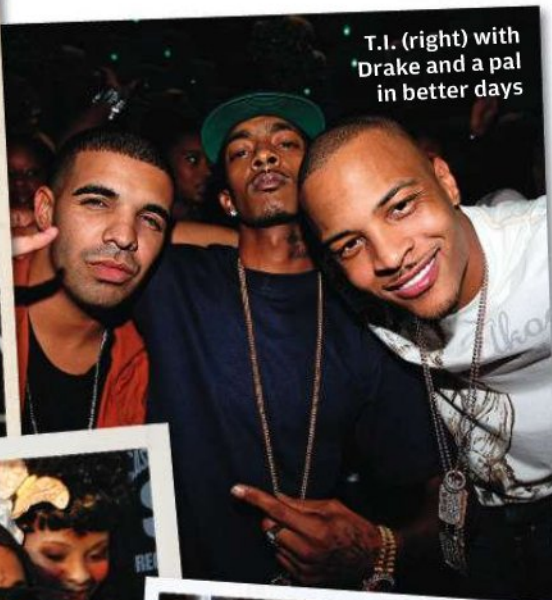
THEY SEEM SO DIFFERENT, TAYLOR Swift and Lady Gaga. One of them you would invite over to watch a *Real Housewives* marathon on Bravo (oh, that Camille!), the other one you would call to come trample you in leather stilettos while drinking blood from the skull of

a virgin. But they're sister spirits, glimmer twins, the yin and yang of music in 2010. They rule the pop charts, both shameless about wanting to be rock stars. T-Sweezy never shows up anywhere without her guitar, while Gaga prefers to dry-hump the piano. They share big dreams and tear-stained makeup, living large like true daughters of Andy Warhol and Dolly Parton. They write and sing megafamous

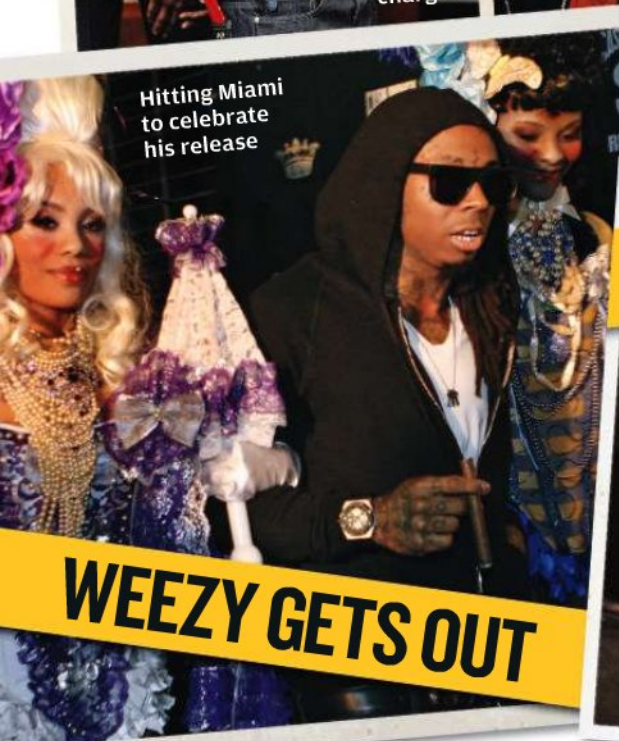
blockbuster songs that your mom loves, but they're both basically insane and kinda scary. They were born this way, baby. And together, they straddle a year when the whole music world seemed crazy, diverse, exciting and unpredictable. So let's have a toast to the douchebags! Because 2010 proved that there's a little douchebag in all of us. Especially if you dated John Mayer. (Too easy! Too easy!)



Wayne in court on gun charges



T.I. (right) with Drake and a pal in better days



WEEZY GETS OUT



T.I. GOES IN

Just seven months later, T.I. heads back to jail.



Daltrey and Townshend

Who Fumble Halftime Performance

Band fails to rehearse (much) or capitalize on massive gig

IN FEBRUARY, THE WHO PLAYED the biggest gig of their career, running through a medley of hits ("Who Are You," "Baba O'Riley" and "Won't Get Fooled Again") for 150 million viewers during the Super Bowl halftime show. But it didn't seem as if the band quite grasped the hugeness of the moment: Neither Pete Townshend nor Roger Daltrey had ever watched a football game (or the halftime-show DVDs the NFL sent them), and they only started rehearsing the week before. Even stranger, they followed up this awesome, once-in-a-lifetime global platform with... nothing. Townshend scrapped the band's planned world tour because he didn't want to interrupt work on his musical, *Floss*, about an aging, out-of-touch rock star. (In fairness, Townshend's hearing loss played a major role.) Still, this is the biggest squandering of a football-related musical opportunity since the 1985 Chicago Bears turned down a 360 deal post-"Super Bowl Shuffle."

ROCK CLUB OF THE YEAR



Macca and Obama share an embrace.

The White House Comes Alive!

Fuck the Royal Albert Hall! The year's hottest venue was the White House, where Paul McCartney, Stevie Wonder, Beyoncé and more rocked private shows. Most chatted with the prez, but not Bob Dylan. "That's how you want Bob Dylan, right?" Obama told RS. "You don't want him to be all cheesin' and grinnin' with you."

Lil Wayne Free, but No Sunshine for T.I.

While Weezy walked, no one could keep poor T.I. out of jail

APPEARANCES TO THE CONTRARY, the timing of the start of Lil Wayne's prison sentence, at Rikers Island, in March, and the release of his seventh studio album, *Rebirth*, one month earlier, was purely coincidental: Turns out it's still not illegal to make an incredibly shitty rap-rock record. (Except in New Mexico, where state troopers have orders to take Fred Durst down "with extreme prejudice" if he's spotted in the vicinity of any public rest areas.) Weezy was actually doing time for illegal-gun possession, and he used his stint in the joint productively: accepting A-list visitors (Kanye, Diddy, Nicki Minaj), contributing a verse to Drake's "Light Up" (via telephone) and sending very weird letters to the Weezy

Thanx You website. ("There's some pretty cool people in here.... Last night, I kicked ass in UNO!")

Meanwhile, fellow hip-hop superstar and illegal-gun enthusiast T.I. was finishing up his own bid (on weapons charges) at Arkansas' Forrest City prison. Alas, just like that old man who worked in the library in *The Shawshank Redemption*, T.I. found adjusting to life on the outside wasn't so easy. By the end of the year, just as Weezy was being released early for good behavior, T.I. was sentenced to probation violation after being caught with five Ecstasy pills—despite the fact that, only a couple of days earlier, he had stopped a suicidal Atlanta man from throwing himself off a building! Apparently T.I. should have broken up an Al Qaeda sleeper cell or something: The judge, unmoved, gave him another 11 months.



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Live Through This! Or Not!

Nineties bands were everywhere this year: Some were Beavis, some were Butt-Head, and others were just Anderson. So how do they measure up on the Nineties-reunion Success-O-Meter?



Soundgarden

That's right - the Seattle grunge vets made the black hole sun shine one more time! Sadly, they only played three shows, but at least Chris Cornell didn't sing any crappy Audioslave songs.

Hole

What's more bogus: a Hole reunion where Courtney Love doesn't invite her old bandmates, or a Hole reunion where she doesn't go on any drug-crazed, blood-spattering rampages? Either way, bogus.

Stone Temple Pilots

STP and Scott Weiland put their reunion tour on hold after his onstage meltdown in Houston, where he told the crowd, "I started drinking again." Suck-type thing!

Faith No More

Hairy dudes living in their moms' basements got so psyched for this tour, they changed their socks. Fun fact: 95 percent of female fans at the shows were revealed to be Queen Amidala action figures.

Alice in Chains

As the song says, you can't kill the rooster! Eight years after Layne Staley went to the barnyard in the sky, the band hired a sound-alike singer and made a hit comeback album.

Pavement

This was everything a reunion tour should be: no new songs, all five guys, a different set list every night, baked guitar solos, lots of drunk dads screaming for "Gold Soundz." Your move, Archers of Loaf!

Beck and Clapton



Eric Clapton and Jeff Beck hit the road, blues solos ensue

HOLY BLUES THUNDER! WHEN Eric Clapton teamed up with his Yardbirds replacement - and fellow country-manoir enthusiast - Jeff Beck for a series of shows this year, it was like Björn Borg and John McEnroe facing off at Wimbledon one last time. Prepping for the run, Clapton admitted that

he wasn't always crazy about Beck. "We were enemies," he told *ROLLING STONE*. "There shouldn't have been a replacement." But by the time the guitar gods appeared together at Madison Square Garden in February, all was forgiven. The pair traded furious leads on "Shake Your Money Maker" and the Cream standard "Outside Woman Blues," leaving us with one request: Do it again, but next time add Yardbirds 3.0 guitarist Jimmy Page.

DIVORCE OF THE YEAR

Tyler to Aerosmith: No More, No More

Yo, Steven Tyler, don't you know the drill for a rock-star midlife crisis? You're supposed to get a new Aston Martin and an underage Ukrainian model, not join *American Idol* for the job that was too lame for Ellen DeGeneres. After 40 years of Aerosmith, Tyler announced he was working on "Brand Tyler" by joining Team Seacrest. Aerosmith fans were pissed, including Kid Rock, who called Tyler's move "the stupidest thing he's ever done." Tyler replied, "He's just jealous."



Tyler Idol-izes.

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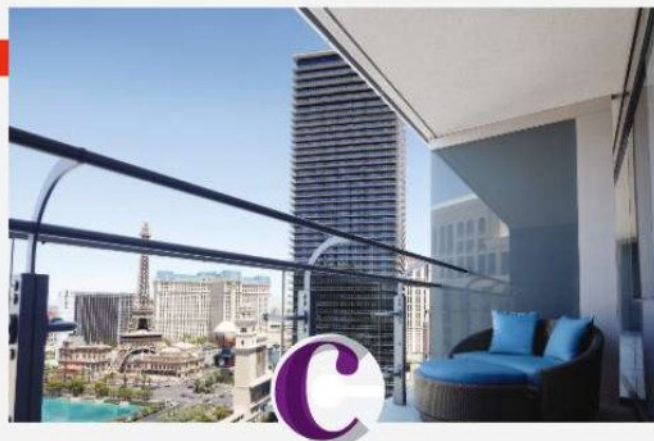
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Dance Dance Revolution!

From BEP to LCD, electronica is back and bleepier than ever

IT'S CLEAR SOMETHING HAS changed in the pop-music world when a former hacker who performs wearing a giant, in-no-way-copyright-infringing mouse head has become one of the best live acts in the country. But Deadmau5 – a.k.a. 29-year-old DJ Joel Zimmerman – is part of a new wave of dance-music superstars who are managing to cross over with American audiences. As French house maestro David Guetta – who produced last year's Black Eyed Peas Euro-tastic smash "I Gotta Feeling" and had his own hit in 2010 with his fourth solo album, *One Love* – marveled, "I've been doing this for 20

years – but in America, I am the new hot guy!"

Pop acts from the Peas and Lady Gaga to Katy Perry and Taio Cruz continued to dominate the airwaves with club tracks that wouldn't sound out of place in a gay disco in Mykonos. Meanwhile, hipsters spent the summer dancing to LCD Soundsystem's latest and the London sound of dubstep. Even the stars of the Nineties electronica boom were back in action: Kruder! Dorfmeister! Both Chemical Brothers! Moby! (Well, not so much Moby.) Sure, admitting we dig the same crappy music beloved by the rest of the world might be a sign of our declining superpower status. But who cares! We haven't taken this much Ecstasy since the Clinton administration!

Deadmau5:
Surprisingly
doesn't Suck!

Beware the Unholy Alliance

IF YOU'RE SEARCHING FOR SIGNS of the end times, you need only take a look at the cosmic forces gathering around us, as they pair off into incredibly bizarre partnerships. Nobody really saw these alliances coming, but it's pretty obvious they are omens of the impending apocalypse. Strange days make for strange bedfellows.



Thom Yorke



Flea

Hey, check out Yorke's new bassist! Wasn't he once in a Young MC video?



Billy Corgan



Jessica Simpson

Despite all his rage, he ended up in Hollywood dating reality-TV stars.



Live Nation



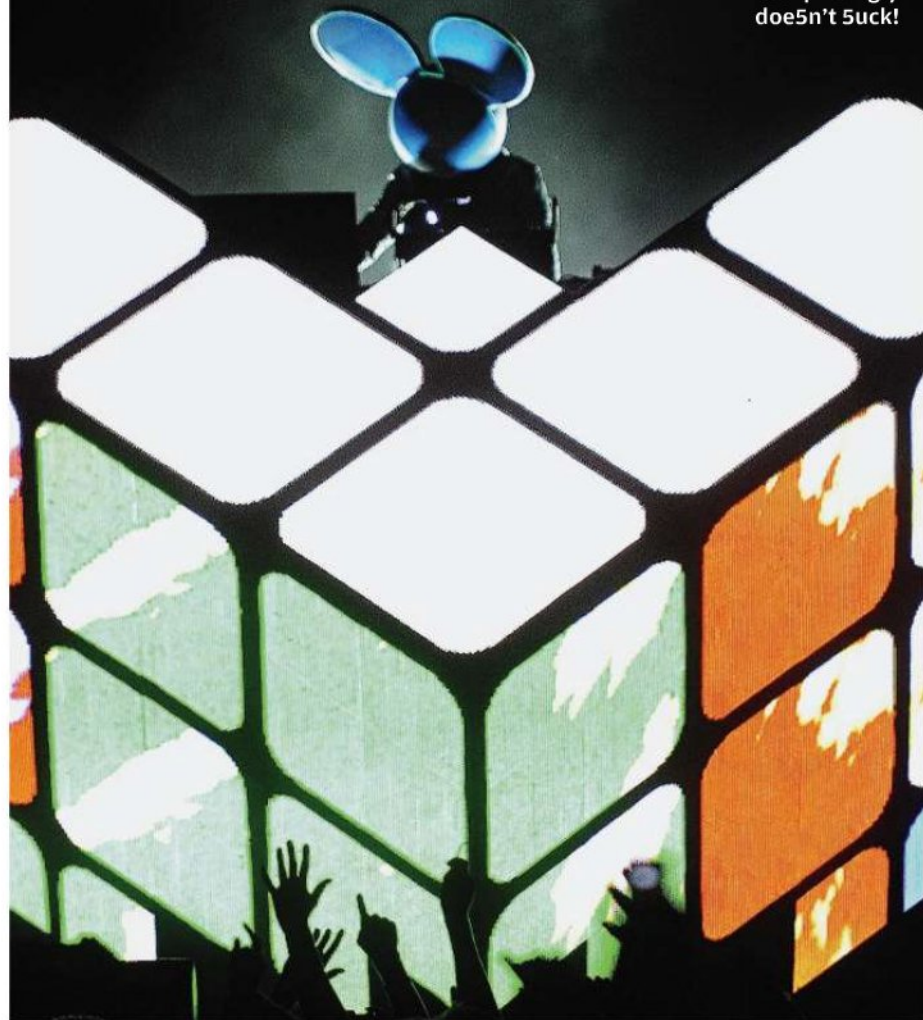
Ticketmaster

Now it's easier than ever to purchase concert tickets! One kidney or two?

INNOVATION OF THE YEAR

All-You-Can-Eat Music Hits the Cloud

For years we've been told that the day would come when we could ditch our CDs and listen to any song ever made on any gadget we happen to have. The prophecy has been fulfilled! While the super-buzzy Euro service Spotify failed to launch here – and Apple and Google still haven't unveiled their secret plans for subscription domination – fans who pay \$10 a month for MOG or Rhapsody get access to millions of songs. Even better, smartphone apps let you take the tunes on the road.



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Welcome to the (Smoke) Machine

Rock concerts got big again. Great news for giant-lemon roadies!

IN A DEAD ZONE FOR THE CONCERT racket, there are two ways a rock star can go. You can scale your show down to the basics, cut expenses and keep the focus on simple musicianship. Or you can stage a spectacle where you have group sex under a

giant robot octopus. With lasers! And pyro! And a plot! So all hail the performers who had the *cojones* (and the budget) to put on a real show. Some of the year's finest tours had the kind of costumes, special effects and bloated theatrics that haven't been seen since Gene Simmons first learned to gargle lighter fluid. For those about to hoist inflatable pigs, we salute you!

MUSE

For their *Resistance* tour, they launched a silver spaceship over the crowd while they played the overture to "Exogenesis: Symphony."

But did they rock out inside a giant glass pyramid? Of course they did!

"MOST FOG" AWARD



LADY GAGA

The Monster Ball had Gaga leading her little monsters down the Yellow Brick Road while teaching lessons (freedom is good!) and feeling up all the dancers.

"MOST BLOOD" AWARD



ROGER WATERS

He brought *The Wall* to the stage, without the rest of Pink Floyd. As he told ROLLING STONE, "I have the same responsibility to put on this production as Picasso did to paint 'Guernica.'"

"MOST BRICKS" AWARD



Cory Monteith and Lea Michele

'Glee' Are the Champions, My Friend!

High school theater dorks take over the music business

THERE'S NEVER BEEN A TV SHOW like *Glee* before, and the American people went crazy for it. Who didn't thrill to see these plucky high school kids learn to harmonize on Journey hits and take up a bold pro-believin' stance? Who didn't root for New Directions? Who didn't love Jane Lynch as the mean cheerleading coach? It kept hitting new highs all year, from the Britney episode (gay!) to the Beyoncé football-game episode (gayer!) to the Carol Burnett episode (now you're just showing off!). Against all odds, the glee-club dorks of William McKinley High became the music industry's biggest hitmakers, turning any random oldie they covered into the smash of the week. They also had the most quotably bitchy dialogue since the glory days of *Gossip Girl*, spawning instant catchphrases like "Dolphins are just gay sharks."

CANDIDATE OF THE YEAR



Yes He Can? Wyclef Runs for President

It's a long road from sampling the Bee Gees to running for president of Haiti. But Wyclef was moved by the January earthquake that devastated his homeland. "Just like Barack started a whole new youth movement, so can I," Wyclef said. The revolution never happened: Clef was ruled ineligible, not being a Haitian resident. He also failed to carry the crucial Pras endorsement. His fellow Fugee said, "His Creole is similar to Jackie Chan's English - no offense to Jackie Chan."

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The First Annual Twitty Awards

Celebrating the best, brightest and craziest tweet-happy rockers

IF THE MUSIC WORLD WERE TWITTER, Twitter would totally be a trending topic. This year, everybody got an account, from over-the-hill rappers who seemed happy just to have someone to talk to (@MCHammer, we see you!)

to seriously un-tech-savvy rock vets who thought a "hashtag" is something you buy in Amsterdam. Here, we celebrate six who really got it right – all-star Twitterati who rocked #s, RTs and LOLs at least as well as they rocked mics. (Including, sadly, one who moved on: @johncmayer, we hardly knew ye.) Ladies and gentlemen, the Twitties go to...

Boy King of Social Media



Justin Bieber (@justinbieber) Someone approached me today and asked me if I was that chick from The L Word...

via Twitter for web

The Best of All Time! ALL TIME!



Kanye West (@kanyewest) Is it wrong to wear a CHANEL dinner jacket with a T shirt to the airport if it's still breakfast time out here in Singapore ughh TOO LATE! via Twitter for web

Oversharer of the Year



John Mayer (@johncmayer) BREAKING CELEBRITY NEWS: I was sitting with my legs crossed for too long and my penis fell asleep

via Twitter for web

Best Pop-Cultural Smarty-Pants



Ezra Koenig (@arze) is Lorenzo Lamas the actor most closely associated with the leather fringe jacket? don't know how to properly research this...

via Twitter for web

Sweetest Self-Promoter



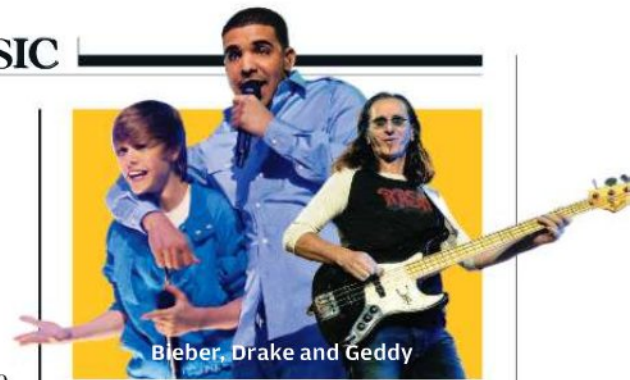
Taylor Swift (@taylorswift13) Baking pumpkin spice cookies with cream cheese icing because I'm very excited. Because a new song is coming out on iTunes at midnight! via Twitter for web

Realest Real Talker



50 Cent (@50cent) I can't believe my grand mothers making me take Out the garbage I'm rich fuck this I'm going home I don't need this shit.

via Twitter for web



Canada to Earth: Party Like It's 2112!

They come from the land of the ice and snow: the Canadian Invasion

DAMN YOU, CANADA! IS THERE no end to your cultural domination? The Dirty North had a heck of a year, giving the world the hottest new rapper, the hottest teen heartthrob and that totally awesome Rush documentary. Drake scored one U.S. radio smash after another, dropping his long-awaited debut album, *Thank Me Later*, while becoming Canada's most exciting hip-hop success story since Snow unleashed *12 Inches of Snow*. His Ontario homey Justin Bieber stole the hearts of America's young ladies, with bangs that fluttered teasingly over his eyebrows. Biebermania reached the point where Kim Kardashian got death threats after paparazzi snapped her and Bieber frolicking on the beach. And the Rush flick *Beyond the Lighted Stage* got rerun on VH1 so many times, it became a weekend-afternoon hangover staple. All that's needed now is for Bieber to do an album of Rush covers. He better hustle, though, while his voice is still as high as Geddy Lee's. Today's Justin Bieber, he gets high on you!

WEB STAR OF THE YEAR

The Bed Intruder Song Dude

Jay-Z might have declared Auto-Tune dead, but the Gregory Brothers – who remix local-news clips – weren't listening. Their masterpiece, "The Bed Intruder Song," features Alabama public-housing resident Antoine Dodson warning his neighbors about a rapist. After it got 25 million YouTube views in the first two weeks, T-Pain tried to form a supergroup with Dodson and the Double Rainbow guy. But then even he realized that Auto-Tune was played out.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: GREG LOCKE/REUTERS/CORBIS; ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES; NO CREDIT; LARRY MARANO/GETTY IMAGES; CHRISTOPHER PETERSON/BUZZFOTO.COM; WENN.COM; EVAN AGOSTIN/AP IMAGES FOR VH1; MAYXONLINE.COM; CHRISTOPHER POLK/AMA2010/GETTY IMAGES FOR DC

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Breaking: All-Star Edition

Remember these guys? Of course you do! A look back at the year's hottest new hitmakers

Bruno Mars

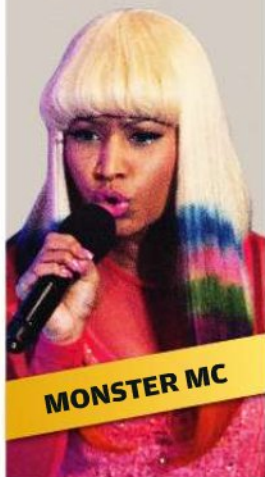
The Hawaiian smoothie started the year as a sought-after songwriter-for-hire (Travis McCoy's "Billionaire," B.o.B's "Nothin' on You") and finished it as a smash artist in his own right, when his "Just the Way You Are" topped the charts for four straight weeks.



CAPTAIN HOOKS

Nicki Minaj

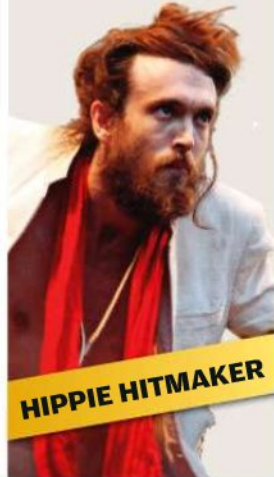
In the space of a few months, the coolest Trinidadian since Billy Ocean went from hustling her mixtapes for free on Twitter to recording with Will.i.am and slaying Kanye on his own track. Not bad for a former waitress at Red Lobster.



MONSTER MC

Edward Sharpe and the Magnetic Zeros

Like a druggier, beardier Arcade Fire, this troupe of 10-odd Laurel Canyon bohobos was the toast of the festival circuit, drawing rapturous crowds and earning blissed-out raves, all without the aid of shoes.



HIPPIE HITMAKER

Drake

Proof that even a half-Jewish boy from the mean streets of Toronto – most famous for playing an 11th-grade paraplegic – can become a platinum hip-hop megastar, provided he's ridiculously talented, insanely well-connected and really good-looking.



PREPPYSEXYCOOL

Florence and the Machine

A London girl with a colossal voice drops out of art school, records an album of eerie goth pop about coffins and sacrifices, and winds up stealing the VMAs and attracting fans like Chris Martin and Jay-Z. Congratulations, Flo – you win 2010!



FLO RIDA

Summer-Tour Meltdown

Concert biz struggles with canceled shows as high ticket prices drive fans away

SO IT DIDN'T EXACTLY HELP THAT THE economy collapsed – followed shortly thereafter by Bono, whose injured back stalled the biggest tour in the universe. And as omens go, that pigeon who shit in the Kings of Leon's mouth was a bad one. But as much as the tour industry wanted to blame outside forces for the plague of empty seats that sprouted in amphitheaters across the country, it couldn't quite make the case. Like, whose idea was it to charge \$250 for Lilith Fair tickets? The tour biz, that's who! Promotion giant Live Nation and rivals like AEG Live faced a wave of canceled shows (Rihanna, Tom Petty, Jonas Brothers) and had to slash ticket prices to \$10 or less for tons of seats. Even with high-wattage openers the Dixie Chicks and Keith Urban, the Eagles – as close to a sure thing as there is in the music biz – had to shorten their stadium run. Of course, there were smash successes: Lady Gaga ruled, the Dave Matthews Band (who made *half a billion* dollars in the past decade) rolled on. But we're just saying, the next time two megacorporations like Live Nation and Ticketmaster tell us they can fix things by forming an even bigger, crazier megacorp? Maybe we tell them, "Nah."

JERRY OF THE YEAR



Touch of Jerry: Kadlecik

Furthur Face-Stealer John Kadlecik

We haven't been so delighted by a new guy joining a band since Filipino Steve Perry-sound-alike Arnel Pineda was plucked from YouTube to front Journey. John Kadlecik – lead guitarist in Bob Weir and Phil Lesh's new more-Dead-than-the-Dead band, Furthur – was the Jerry Garcia in Dark Star Orchestra. Now, with the real guys, Kadlecik is so Jerry that Weir and Lesh both describe him as "spooky." Fans, like MySpace commentator Morn-ing Dew, agree: "Thanks for shedding that beautiful light our way!"

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Rolling Stones *Exile on Main St.*

The band answered fans' prayers with this reissue of the 1972 classic, rescuing unfinished tunes like the gospel-boogie "Plundered My Soul." Yet it all swaggers with the same fever-in-the-funk-house spirit.



Bruce Springsteen *Darkness on the Edge of Town*

After the romantic splendor of *Born to Run*, this one was leaner and meaner. But 32 years later, the hard-edged portrait of Jersey life is getting its rightful share of acclaim.

Springsteen, Stones Revisit the Seventies

Rock legends dig in the vaults – and make their best albums even greater

NOBODY EVER CAPTURED THE bleak air of Seventies desperation like the Rolling Stones and Bruce Springsteen. What the Stones did for sex and drugs on *Exile on Main Street*, Springsteen did for cars and factories on *Darkness on the Edge of Town*. So it's fitting that both these artists chose the recession-ravaged days of 2010 to add new luster to their *Serpico*-era masterpieces – while finally releasing the long-buried outtakes that anyone else would have tried to milk into a whole career. Springsteen's two-disc set *The Promise: The "Darkness on the Edge of Town" Story* had a mind-boggling 21 songs, either drafts or discards, taking these hard-luck Jersey-rat characters'

stories even further. (The '69 Chevy in "Racing in the Street" was originally a '32 Ford? Good change!) "I wanted the aggression," Springsteen told *ROLLING STONE*. "I wanted the harshness of the guitar, and I got a chance to play." The refurbished *Exile* contained the rock & roll answer to the Holy Grail: previously unheard music from the famously decadent original sessions. Mick Jagger touched up five unfinished tracks with new lyrics, saying, "I listened a bit to the regular album and just sort of copped the attitude." The Stones still seem to find it amusing that fans get so obsessed with *Exile on Main Street*. "They talk about *debauchery* and everything," Keith Richards says. "I mean, you can't write and record and also be debauched at the same time." But of course you can – and *Exile* still offers stunning proof.



Em and Jay

Eminem, Jay-Z Rule the World

Rap titans take it to the next level with monster hits, stadium shows

IT WAS A HUGE YEAR FOR BOTH Eminem and Jay-Z. Em bounced back from a long hiatus (and an underwhelming comeback record, last year's *Relapse*) with one of the biggest albums of 2010, *Recovery*. Meanwhile, Jigga continued to ride the ubiquity of his *Blueprint 3* smash "Empire State of Mind" by stepping up his live game (including headlining stints at Coachella and Bonnaroo) and, oh yeah, writing a bestselling book, *Freedom*. Wait, that was Jonathan Franzen – Jay's was the almost equally lauded *Decoded*. To top it all off, the Dream Team paired for shows in the ballparks of their respective hometowns (Detroit and New York), featuring Dr. Dre, Drake, Kanye West and Chris "I Can't Understand Why Rappers Think I'm Cool" Martin.

FAKE GENRE OF THE YEAR

Slutwave: So Unsexily Sexy, It's Sexy Again

All the ladies in the house say *ho!* Or all the ho's in the house say *lady!* The hot pop-starlet style is a parody of over-the-top sexiness exaggerated way past the point of camp – "slutwave," as the blog Hipster Runoff calls it. Katy Perry shooting whipped cream out of her breasts! Lady Gaga shooting sparks out of hers! Ke\$ha in general! Cher? Not slutwave enough!



Katy Perry

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The Good, the Bad, the Wha?

It might have been Kanye's world, but the rest of us had to live in it - and some (welcome back, Jimmy Cliff!) rode out 2010 better than others (really, John Mayer?). We break it down:

WINNERS

Kanye West

Every single he dropped felt like part of a cliffhanger serial drama - could he top "Power"? "Monster"? "Runaway"? - building up to the year's craziest and best album. Bonus: He said dumb stuff!

Jimmy Cliff

He stole the show at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame ceremony, belting out "The Harder They Come." Meanwhile, Genesis declined to perform, citing a previous commitment to solving the problem of illegal aliens in this land of confusion.

Train

How many times have you sat around the house cranking "Drops of Jupiter" and saying, "Damn, I wish this band would have another hit! They could call it 'Hey, Soul Sister' or something"?

Arcade Fire

They birthed an old-fashioned stadium-rock epic, the kind you're supposed to listen to on headphones and re-evaluate where your head is at. And they filled actual stadiums.

Buffalo Springfield

Stop, hey, what's that sound? These famously pugnacious hippies buried the hatchet at Neil Young's Bridge School Benefit to jam out on "Rock & Roll Woman" and "Mr. Soul" one more time.

James Taylor and Carole King

Their *Live at the Troubadour* had moms all over America driving to where Tower Records used to be in search of this Yalta Summit of Seventies mellow. And their arena tour was one of the year's biggest. Earth? Moved.

Cee Lo Green

The lady-killer proved he was even bigger than Gnarl Barkley with his breakup anthem "Fuck You." It sounded exactly like the Doobie Brothers, which is kinda genius in itself!

Keith Richards

Be honest: Nobody expected his book to be anywhere near this great. "In the back of the Bentley, somewhere between Barcelona and Valencia, Anita and I looked at each other," Keef wrote. "Next thing I know, she's giving me a blow job." Nobel, represent!



LOSERS

Kanye West

Sometimes, even when you win, you lose! Mr. Pity Me was the last man in America sticking up for George W. Bush. Next up: his Fox News special, "My Beautiful Fair Balanced Fantasy."

The Jonas Brothers

JoBro, you don't! The heartlessly fickle teen girls of America stopped caring. Kevin got married. Nick's solo album tanked, selling barely over 151,000 copies.



Christina Aguilera

X(pired)-tina's year involved a flop comeback album, a canceled tour and a movie with Cher called *Burlesque*. Damn. Even Miley Cyrus had a less humiliating year, and she did a video where she sat in a bird cage.

Fall Out Boy

Thks fr th Mmrs! The band fell apart, which means 2005 is officially over. As Pete Wentz mused on Twitter, "A hiatus is forever until you get lonely or old. I don't plan on either." Ouchville population: You, other guys in Fall Out Boy!

John Mayer

He had a nice little hit ("Heartbreak Warfare") that was perhaps canceled out by his addiction to overshares, including the statement "I've got a Benetton heart and a fuckin' David Duke cock."

M.I.A.

Made John Mayer look eloquent.

"We Are the World" remake

"The next generation stepped up," Lionel Richie said. Actually, Li, they could have used you, because this Haiti benefit was a well-intentioned ough, bringing together Will.i.am, Barbra Streisand and Al Jardine for hopefully the last time. On the bright side, Lil Wayne sang the Dylan part.

Texas cops

Busting Willie Nelson for weed? You America-hating fascist bastards probably root for Jackie Gleason in *Smokey and the Bandit*.

The "Spider-Man" musical

Bad news for Radiohead's *Aquaman* opera!



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TRIBUTES

Honoring the artists who died this year

Willie Mitchell, 81

The Memphis soul great discovered Al Green and produced his classic Seventies LPs. "He was the Mecca of soul and R&B," remembered Green.



Doug Fieger, 57

As frontman of L.A. power-pop band the Knack, Fieger scored a monster hit in 1979 after writing "My Sharona."

Teddy Pendergrass, 59

Pendergrass had hits with Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes, and then went solo, releasing lush bedroom soul gems like "Love T.K.O."



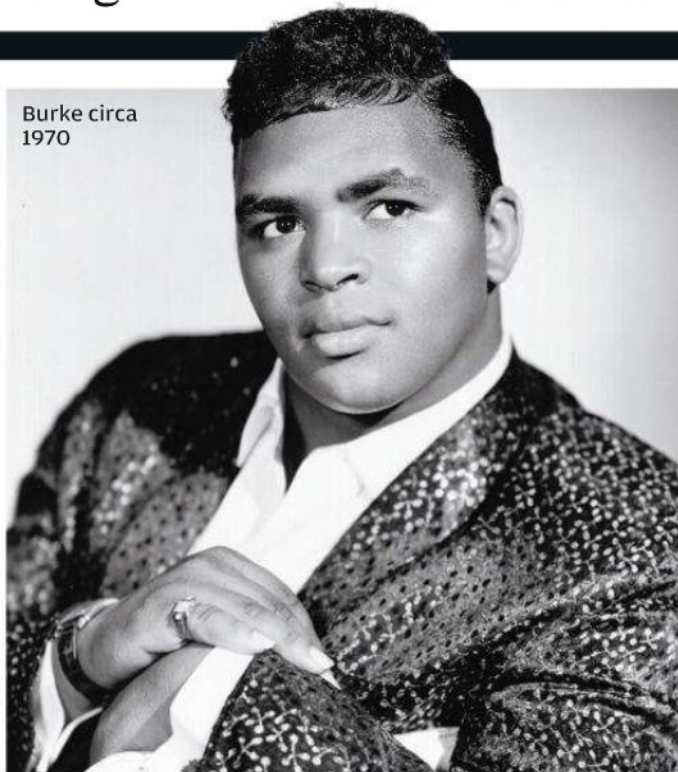
Ronnie James Dio, 67

"He's the greatest [metal] singer of all time," says James Hetfield about the diminutive Dio, who replaced Ozzy Osbourne in Black Sabbath in the 1980s.

Guru, 48

"Guru was at the vanguard of rap," says Nas, of the legendary Gang Starr MC. "He was never negative - he was just saying what was going on in the streets."

Burke circa 1970



Solomon Burke

The King of Rock and Soul, 70, left behind 21 children and some of the greatest soul music of all time

EVEN THOUGH HE WASN'T AS FAMOUS AS RAY CHARLES or James Brown, Burke, who died of natural causes on October 10th, was on the shortlist of candidates for greatest soul singer of all time. He fused country and gospel on tracks like "Just Out of Reach"; his supercharged classic "Everybody Needs Somebody to Love" was discovered by a new generation after it was featured in *The Blues Brothers*. A preacher, mortician and father to 21 children, Burke - who weighed more than 300 pounds - lived an outsize life. Says Aretha Franklin, "He was without a doubt one of the best."

Alex Chilton

CHILTON, WHO DIED OF A heart attack on March 17th at 59, had only one major hit - with the Box Tops' "The Letter" in 1967 - but as the leader of power-pop icons Big Star, he influenced a generation of bands from R.E.M. to the Replacements. Though the band split in 1974, its legend grew, and Big Star finally reunited in 1993 for sporadic tours.



Chilton in 1968

Paul "The Pig" Gray, 38

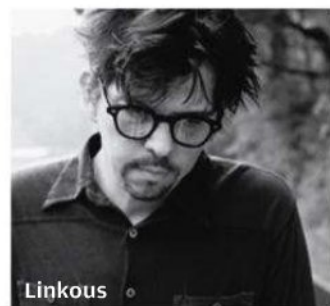
Bassist and co-founder of Iowa metal band Slipknot.

Bobby Charles, 71

Louisiana songwriter behind the R&B classics "Walking to New Orleans" and "See You Later Alligator."

Jay Reatard, 29

Memphis punk rocker who released 22 full-length albums in his short career.



Mark Linkous, 47

Leader of Nineties low-fi act Sparklehorse.

Marvin Isley, 56

Isley Brothers bassist during their 1970s funk era.

Tuli Kupferberg, 86

Beat poet and co-founder of New York counterculture icons the Fugs.

Hank Cochran, 74

Country songwriter who penned hits for Merle Haggard, Patsy Cline and Ray Price.

Andy Hummel, 59

Founding Big Star bassist, wrote "The India Song" and "Way Out West."

Year in Music

Contributors: MARK BINELLI, JOSH EELLS, MICHAEL ENDELMAN, ANDY GREENE, JONATHAN RINGEN, ROB SHEFFIELD

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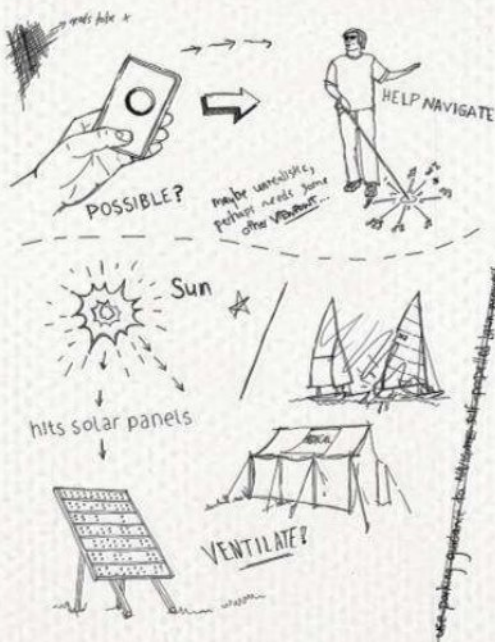
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ALBUMS OF THE YEAR

Kanye's 'Fantasy' conquered reality;
the Black Keys locked into a groove;
Arcade Fire burned down the suburbs

1 Kanye West

My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy Roc-A-Fella/Def Jam



With *My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy*, Kanye West made music as sprawingly messy as his life. When he wasn't feuding with Matt Lauer or bugging out on Twitter, Kanye was building hip-hop epics, songs full of the kind of grandiose gestures that only the foolish attempt and only the wildly talented pull off. The more he piled on – string sections, Elton John piano solos, vocoder freakouts, Bon Iver cameos, King Crimson and Rick James samples – the better the music got. Never has Kanye rhymed so hilariously (“Have you ever had sex with a pharaoh?/I put the pussy in a sarcophagus”) or been so insightful about his relationship-torpedoing faults. From the bracing prog-rock of “Power” to the spooky grandeur of “Runaway” to the shape-shifting “Hell of a Life,” he made all other music seem dimmer and duller. Is the album dark? Sure. Twisted? Of course. But above all, it's beautiful.

2 The Black Keys

Brothers Nonesuch



The duo boil it down on their best record yet: vivid tunes stripped bare and rubbed raw, with hot splashes of color and hooks popping through like compound fractures. “Howlin’ for You” smears gnarly blues over a glam beat cribbed from Gary Glitter’s “Rock and Roll Part 2,” while a cover of Jerry Butler’s broken-hearted hit “Never Give You Up” takes Dan Auerbach’s falsetto-flashing soulman persona to the next level. It’s rock minimalism pushed to the max.

3 Elton John and Leon Russell

The Union Decca

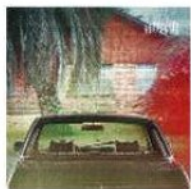


Two rock giants, one largely forgotten, rekindle a friendship and make music that ranks with their best. Producer T Bone Burnett delivers his most spectacular production in memory, filled with shining steel guitar, chortling brass and gospel-time choirs. Ultimately, it’s Russell’s voice that shines brightest, drawing on the entire history of American popular music in its canny, vulnerable, knowing croon.

TWISTED
No sane man could have created *Fantasy*.

4 Arcade Fire

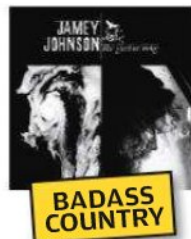
The Suburbs Merge



Arcade Fire don't do anything small – so leave it to the Montreal collective to make an album of vast, orchestral rock that locates the battle for the human soul amid big houses and manicured lawns. *The Suburbs* is the band's most adventurous album yet: See the psychotic speed strings on “Empty Room,” the Crazy Horse rush of “Month of May,” the synth-pop disco of “Sprawl II (Mountains Beyond Mountains).” Win Butler and his wife, Régine Chassagne, sing about suburban boredom, fear of change and wanting to have a kid of their own – always scaling their intimate confessions to arena-rock levels and finding beauty wherever they look.

5 Jamey Johnson

The Guitar Song Mercury



What does Jamey Johnson keep under all of that hair? Songs. Nashville's gruffest and grittiest star turns out to be its most reliable traditionalist, a Music Row pro who can write a song for every emotional season. Johnson pulled out a whole slew of them – 25, clocking in north of 105 minutes – for his double-disc fourth album: acoustic confessions and rugged boogie blues, big weepers and grim reapers, cover tunes and novelty ditties, not to mention “California Riots” and “Playing the Part,” a pair of fiercely funny, unrepentantly redneck swipes at the frou-frou blue states.



CHARMERS
Vampire Weekend's *Contra* topped the albums chart.

6 Vampire Weekend

Contra XL



Contra was the album where Vampire Weekend discovered they could do just about anything: dubby, slo-mo gorgeousness, clattering pseudo-punk, African guitar riffs, choral swells, songs that rhyme “horchata” with “Aranciata”

and “Masada.” Ezra Koenig wrote dense lyrics about young love and Third World strife, but no matter how meditative he got, his melodic skills never failed him: Rarely do songs this lushly produced feel so buoyant or seem to zip by so quickly. By the time you marvel at the spacy ballad “I Think UR a Contra” or get “Your sword's grown old and rusty/Burnt beneath the rising sun” (from “Giving Up the Gun”) stuck in your head, you realize these guys are as much about pure pleasure as anything else.

The Lost Treasures of Bruce Springsteen

Bruce Springsteen *The Promise: The “Darkness on the Edge of Town” Story* Columbia



This is not a reissue. Unless you were there for every note, at the long and exhausting sessions for Bruce Springsteen's 1978 masterpiece, *Darkness on the Edge of Town*, this set is all new music and right up there with the best of 2010. The central attraction in this lavish and thorough examination of Springsteen's journey to *Darkness* – which includes a documentary film and two live DVDs – is two CDs of previ-

ously unreleased tracks that he wrote, recorded with the E Street Band, then discarded along the way.

These 21 recordings prove two things: He was right, at the time, to make them outtakes, and he was just as right to finally let them loose. Compared to the narrative grit and redemptive thunder of *Darkness* triumphs like “Badlands” and “The Promised Land,” the euphoric charge of “Rendezvous” and the super-Stax sauce of “One Way Street” sound like automatic genius, the kind of bar-band bravado and boardwalk-love



The E Street Band in 1977

stories Springsteen had already perfected on *Born to Run*. But heard now, they are songs that brighten any year. In fact, Springsteen's original readings here of “Because the Night” and “Talk to Me,” given away to Patti Smith and Southside Johnny, respectively, sound a lot like

the five-star pop'n'soul on his most recent albums. *The Promise* is a rare, frank look at the road to greatness. It is also full of songs that should have been and still sound like greatest hits.

DAVID FRICKE



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THANKS! Drake's *Later* delivered on its huge expectations.

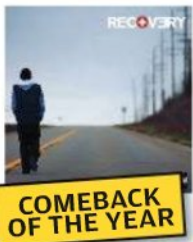


7 Drake
Thank Me Later Cash Money/Universal



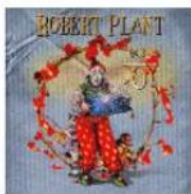
Arriving after three years of mixtapes, guest spots and merciless hype, the debut LP from the Canadian actor-turned-rapper delivered the goods with sumptuous beats, airtight rhymes and nuanced introspection. Drake's sleepy, soulful flow gave his morning-after reflections on the high life an undercurrent of irony. He's the definitive star of hip-hop's tortured post-Kanye era: a guy who can't quite decide if "I've been up for four days gettin' money" is a brag or a burden.

9 Eminem
Recovery Aftermath/Interscope



"Let's be honest, that last *Relapse* CD was eh-hh," Eminem rapped on *Recovery*, which turned out to be the post-rehab victory lap that the schlocky *Relapse* wasn't. Dominating radio, Eminem was back on top in 2010, but he was also older and wiser: a scared dad who'd been to drug-addict hell and made it back with his rhyme skills intact. When he pledges to stay sober on the hit "Not Afraid," you know the man is hellbent serious.

8 Robert Plant
Band of Joy Rounder



Keep waiting, Jimmy Page – he's not coming back. Plant followed up his dreamy roots-romp *Raising Sand* (2007) with an album that was edgier and rootsier: Plant and his bandleader, guitarist Buddy Miller, pursue ancient songs and modern tangents with a black-light glow on this psychedelic exploration of blues and country, covering Los Lobos, Townes Van Zandt, the slow-core band Low and public-domain gospel as if they are all stops on the true road to nirvana.

10 LCD Soundsystem
This Is Happening DFA/Virgin



James Murphy convenes his team of New York punk-funk troopers for a heavy-duty breakup album, tunneling out of the emotional wreckage with the help of Nancy Whang's keyboard glimmers and Pat Mahoney's monster drums. Murphy testifies about adult love gone bad ("I Can Change") over a host of electronic dance styles, while the goof-ball anthem "Drunk Girls" offers a motto for casual lovers everywhere: "I believe in waking up together."

Rookies of the Year

Best Coast *Crazy for You*
Mexican Summer

Beth Cosentino keeps everything short and sugar-sweet, riding hard for Cali with hooks grabbed from old girl groups and Ramones records.

Sleigh Bells *Treats* *N.E.E.T.*
Imagine the White Stripes fronted by Meg, powered by a malevolent drum machine, and bred on metal and hip-hop. Then pump your fist, bitch.

Surfer Blood *Astro Coast* *Kanine*
Florida kids mix button-down indie rock with dirty reverb and shimmering riffs; think Vampire Weekend with sand in their board shorts.

Dylan LeBlanc *Paupers Field*
Rough Trade
You can hear why Emmylou Harris endorsed this Louisiana fingerpicker: His haunted tenor veers between Southern soulman and honky-tonk crooner.

Nicki Minaj *Pink Friday* *Young Money*
A dazzling display of range from hip-hop's new queen. Slow-burn ballads? Check. Hyperfrenetic battle rhymes about peeing on rivals? Check!

Das Racist *Shut Up, Dude*
Mishka/Greedhead
The Brooklyn rappers behind the "Combination Pizza Hut and Taco Bell" lark put their smarts and chops on display for a bong-rattling mixtape.

Mumford and Sons *Sigh No More*
Glassnote
Americana, as imagined by four English boys: all earnest harmonies and pub-fueled bellowing. Who knew the banjo could be so badass?

Die Antwoord *\$0\$*
Cherrytree/Interscope
The South African hip-hop crew spit in both Afrikaans and English while managing to sound frightening in any language.

Free Energy *Stuck on Nothing* *DEA*
Philly boys with a jones for T. Rex, Thin Lizzy and the Cars kick out catchy, Seventies-steeped party rock.

YelaWolf *Trunk Muzik*
O-60 Ghet-O-Vision/Interscope
This Alabama MC looks like Travis Barker, raps like a moonshine-fueled Eminem.



Beth Cosentino

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11 The Dead Weather
Sea of Cowards
Warner Bros./Third Man

This isn't so much an LP as it is a rush of metallic-blues spasms – and the best excessive-rock fun of the year. Jack White is the back-seat guy here – a singing drummer – but he leads by example: His Bonham-like force propels the zigzagging guitars and Alison Mosshart's Gothic-siren incantations.



12 John Mellencamp
No Better Than This
Rouner

Folk-blues idealism – recorded on a mono tape machine, in places like a Georgia church and Sun Studios – with a very modern anger at the world after the crash. When Mellencamp sings “A Graceful Fall,” he channels a pride and rage as fresh as last night's business reports.



13 Taylor Swift
Speak Now Big Machine

Speak Now proves that Swift is more than the world's biggest country singer – at 21, she's a one-woman song factory with a rock & roll heart. There are tracks about celebrity studs, but what matters is how she can command a deep-freeze soft-soul ballad like “Enchanted” or a Phil Spector-style rocker like “Long Live.”



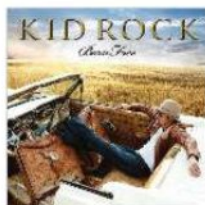
14 Robyn
Body Talk
Cherrytree/Interscope

Body Talk began as two sugar-shot EPs; by the time the full-length dropped, it felt like a greatest-hits package. The Swedish diva's beats and tunes smoke her American competition. So does her wit: See “Fembot” and the secretly poignant “Don't Fucking Tell Me What to Do.”



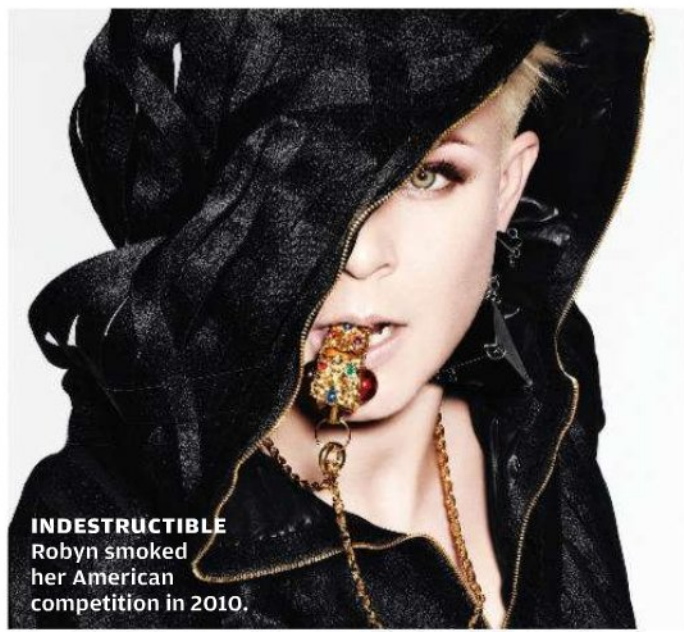
15 The National
High Violet 4AD

These moody Brooklyn rockers could have coasted with a repeat of their 2007 breakthrough, *Boxer*, but *Violet* is riskier and craftier, opening up their poetic guitar reveries with a late-Beatles sense of experimentation. Matt Berninger sings “Bloodbuzz Ohio” like a barfly who thinks you can't tell how terrified he is.



16 Kid Rock
Born Free Atlantic

Mr. Bawitdaba finally cuts the Bob Seger record of his dreams. This Rick Rubin-produced classic-rock throwdown is pure Detroit drive-time 1975: From hard-nosed arena anthems to winsome country rock to blue-collar boogie, Rock shows a versatility – and depth – no one thought possible back in his Bullgod youth.



17 Beach House
Teen Dream Sub Pop

Victoria Legrand's sexy vocals are hazy and androgynous, like a stoned late-night heart-to-heart in which no one's sure who is sleeping where. Beach House sharpened their sound and hooks on their third album – what's surprising is that it only made their music more mysterious, more magical.



18 Kings of Leon
Come Around Sundown
RCA

The best arena-rock album of the year. The backwoods doo-wop flair of “Mary” and country-U2 yearning in “Back Down South” catch the Kings at the perfect midpoint between pure pop and down-home. And the staccato “End,” *Sundown*'s first song, sounds like a new beginning.



19 M.I.A.
Maya
N.E.E.T./Interscope/XL

The backlash against M.I.A.'s high jinks – that graphic “Born Free” video and her beef with *The New York Times* – distracted everyone from the fact that her biggest provocations in 2010 were sonic. *Maya*'s art-punk noise and electro beats made for the most abrasive protest music in recent memory.



20 Neil Young
Le Noise Reprise

Turbulent, distorted – and one of the most intimate albums Young has ever made. Most of *Le Noise* is jagged, solo electric guitar, but even when Young goes acoustic on “Love and War,” his lifelong determination – “There've been songs about love/I sang songs about war/Since the back streets of Toronto” – is plenty loud.

"I'd trade my yellow stripe
for a mouth right now."

-Rainbow



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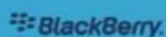
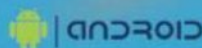
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At age 7, Michael Phelps really didn't even like getting his face wet.

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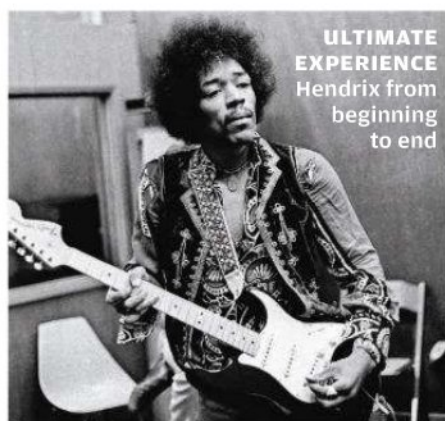
BEST REISSUES OF THE YEAR

By David Fricke

Bob Dylan

The Bootleg Series, Vol. 9 - The Witmark Demos: 1962-1964 Columbia/Legacy

These rough sketches, made by Dylan for his song publishers to register copyright and solicit covers, are actually the sound of seismic change: the ascent of the singer-songwriter, at the expense of Tin Pan Alley, and his dazzling maturation as a composer. Talking-blues and protest grenades give way to a robust grace and emotional acuity that peaks, despite a tossed-off reading, in "I'll Keep It With Mine," maybe the best song he ever gave away.



Jimi Hendrix

West Coast Seattle Boy Sony Legacy

The guitarist's four years in the maelstrom are retold from gripping, all-new angles: studio detours, live whiplash and newly unearthed songs. But the real news here is the prelude: the first full account of Hendrix's sideman years. Don Covay and Little Richard didn't know they had it so good.

Syl Johnson

Complete Mythology Numero Group

Syl Johnson deserved the world. His bright, gritty tenor sounded like Sam Cooke and James Brown exulting at once. But Johnson owned Chicago with these small-label sides issued from 1959 to 1972. This massive box has four CDs, six LPs, a deep-detail book and a party that still won't quit.

Various Artists

Africa: 50 Years of Music 1960-2010

Sterns/Discograph

This box is Africa in a day: 18 CDs, grouped by region, tracing roots and fusions from Zimbabwe's Bhundu Boys and Algeria's Cherifa to the Congolese kalimba band Konono N°1 and Benin's world-pop

star Angélique Kidjo. The result is price-friendly and cohesively programmed, with a vital aftereffect: You want to go deeper.

The Rolling Stones

Exile on Main Street Rolling Stones/Universal

The Stones add 10 outtakes (some with new overdubs) to *Exile's* ragged perfection. But the extras have their own jolt, like the creeping gris-gris of "I'm Not Signifying" and Keith Richards' vividly wounded alternate vocal for "Soul Survivor."

Various Artists

Next Stop Is Vietnam: The War on Record 1961-2008 Bear Family

Vietnam was a war fought with guitars as well as napalm. This 13-disc set, with a parade-dress-quality book, juxtaposes dispatches from Bob Dylan, the Doors and the Fugs with records by country and pop hawks and songs from the aftermath, as veterans came home to cold shoulders and worse (John Prine's "Sam Stone"). This is essential American history in sound – and a lesson in the art of morale.

Delaney and Bonnie and Friends

On Tour With Eric Clapton Rhino Handmade

In 1969, the Bramletts briefly led a roaring-R&B big band with Clapton, George Harrison and Dave Mason on guitars. The set lists at these four U.K. shows were consistent. So were the fireworks.

Burning Spear

Marcus Garvey & Garvey's Ghost

Hip-O Select

This 1975 spiritual-reggae classic, with Kingston-Impressions harmonies flanking the Rasta-chant soul of Winston Rodney, is paired with its '76 dub companion.

Love

Love Lost Sundazed

Arthur Lee's wilderness years begin with these aborted 1971 sessions. He leads a heavy Love, far from the delicacy of 1967's *Forever Changes* but compelling in its blunt-riff turbulence and frank despair.

Various Artists

Come and Get It: The Best of Apple Records

Apple

Hits and weirdness by Beatles protégés, from Badfinger and Mary Hopkin to a Hare Krishna choir and a guy named Brute Force, capture a brief, utopian moment in what once was the record biz.

'TIS THE SEASON

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SINGLES OF THE YEAR

Eminem got sober, Arcade Fire got spooked, Katy Perry flashed her hits, and Kanye sang one for jerk-offs everywhere



LET'S HAVE A TOAST In 2010, no song was as crazily epic as "Runaway."

1 Kanye West feat. Pusha T "Runaway"

It takes a special kind of dark, twisted genius to raise the white flag of surrender while raising a middle finger. Kanye West is that genius. "Runaway" is Kanye's musical response to the Taylor Swift affair, but it's much more than that: a nine-minute meditation on romantic failure and public infamy. Kanye creates a huge, eerie beat out of thunderous drums and plinking piano, and he turns the phrase "Let's have a toast for the douchebags" into a refrain nearly as catchy as "She loves you – yeah, yeah, yeah." In 2010, no other song was so crazily epic or jaw-droppingly gorgeous – not on the radio, not anywhere. Now, everyone raise your glasses.

2 Cee Lo Green "Fuck You"

The title alone would have guaranteed hundreds of thousands of Web clicks. But Cee Lo didn't just say "Fuck you" – he said it with humor and serious panache. Despite the bummed-out lyrics, the Motown-style beat is DayGlo-bright, and Cee Lo's lovelorn lament doubles as an anthem for lean times: "If I was richer/I'd still be with ya/Ha, now ain't that some shit?"

3 Sade "Soldier of Love"

Nobody knows where Sade disappears to for years at a time between hits, but "Soldier of Love" proves she knows how to make a hell of a re-entrance. She sings about emotional devastation over a beat that mixes quiet-storm synths with acid-damaged riffs straight out of TV on the Radio's playbook. It's as close as she's ever come to blowing her cool.

4 Katy Perry "Teenage Dream"

BEST PURE POP

Co-written by Max Martin and Dr. Luke, this buoyant electropop singalong is 2010's catchiest tune. As for that "teenage dream," Perry doesn't mince words: "Let's go all the way tonight."

5 Arcade Fire "We Used to Wait"

"Now our lives are changing fast," sings Win Butler, spooked and sleepless. But his empathetic croon – and his band's orchestral-rock wallop – make high anxiety sound almost sublime.

6 Mavis Staples "You Are Not Alone"

A modern hymn, written by Wilco's Jeff Tweedy and sung with maternal assurance by the voice that once told you to "Respect Yourself."

7 Vampire Weekend "White Sky"

Synth foam, perky digital rhythms, joyful whoops and African-flavored guitars. The sound of a young band discovering how much is possible.

8 Janelle Monáe feat. Big Boi "Tightrope"

ART-FUNK MONSTER

Sister-from-another-planet Monáe delivers a ferocious, horn-splashed burner that mashes up Cab Calloway, hip-hop, James Brown and art-pop wackiness.

9 Broken Bells "The Ghost Inside"

This noirish jam mixes Danger Mouse's steely funk with a creepily addictive chorus from the Shins' James Mercer. Bet you loosen your collar.

10 Kanye West feat. Jay-Z, Rick Ross, Nicki Minaj and Bon Iver "Monster"

On this rumbling id-fest, Minaj delivers the cameo of the year, switching personae and voices like she's rap's Meryl Streep. Kanye has the good sense to let her go on for 31 thrilling bars.



LIGHTS OUT™

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11 The Black Keys

"Everlasting Light"

A steady-grooving blues-rock ballad, with Dan Auerbach's falsetto floating over craggy funk like some beautiful ghost.

12 Mark Ronson and the Business International feat. Q-Tip and MNDR

"Bang Bang Bang"

Ronson turns a French kiddie tune into a Technicolor hook on this synth-pop fire starter.

13 The Dead Weather

"Hustle and Cuss"

Jack White and Alison Mosshart howl over the dirtiest riff of the year, generating ungodly amounts of sexual electricity.

14 Big Boi feat. Cutty

"Shutterbugg"

OutKast's brawnier half throws an electro party, coaxing players to the dance floor with a nasty ghetto-tech bass line.

15 Drake

"Over"

HIGH-DRAMA HIP-HOP

Drake rhymes about how stardom is both terrifying and awesome. With a huge, clattering beat, it's also irresistible.

16 Cold War Kids

"Coffee Spoon"

SoCal kids hallucinate about the high life, turning "ascetics wring their hands" into a killer chorus.

17 LCD Soundsystem

"I Can Change"

The year's best Depeche Mode song is also its best Smiths song. James Murphy shows off a great falsetto while expressing pain with wild humor.

18 Jenny and Johnny

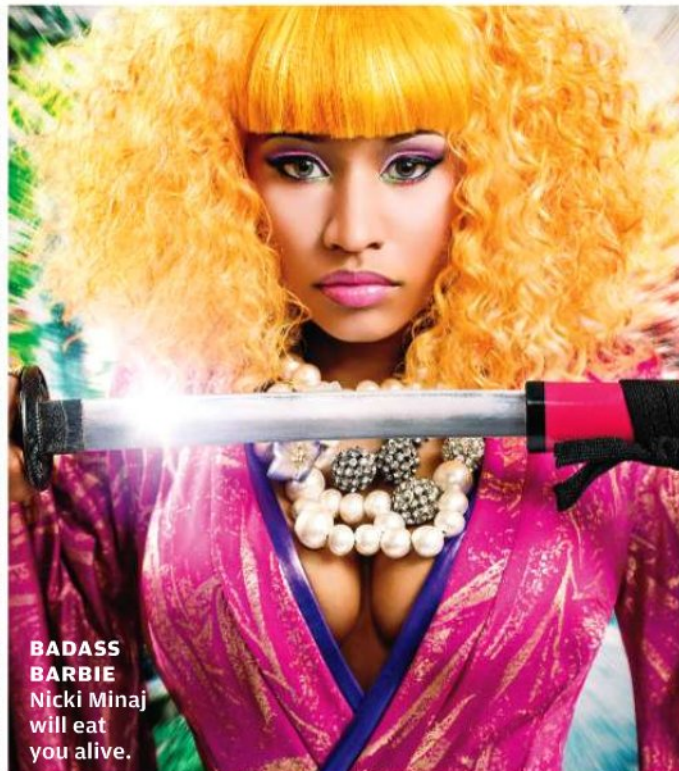
"Scissor Runner"

Power pop finds its own George Burns and Gracie Allen. Her best borscht-belt joke? "I'll forgive you/If I outlive you."

19 The New Pornographers

"Your Hands (Together)"

The indie-rock collective harmonizes about silver bullets and piles on the classic-rock guitars. Result: bizarro pop that's hard to shake.



20 Best Coast

"Boyfriend"

A heartbreaker about a lonely summer - imagine Brian Wilson as a sensitive stoner girl.

21 Sleigh Bells

"Infinity Guitars"

BEST NOISE POP

A classic girl-group tune set against skull-rattling guitar fuzz that hurts so good.

22 Rick Ross feat. Styles P

"B.M.F. (Blowin' Money Fast)"

Ross flows like the Barry White of white powder on this lush drug-lord fantasia.

23 Jamey Johnson

"Macon"

Johnson rolls slow and steady on this rough diamond of Seventies Southern rock.

24 Eminem

"Not Afraid"

Em opens up about sobriety, disses his last album and pledges to be a better dad. His most inspiring song ever.

25 Nicki Minaj

"Did It On'em"

A hazy, synapse-butchered throwdown. Nicki: "If I had a dick, I would pull it out and piss on 'em."

26 Robyn

"Dancing on My Own"

The Swedish diva spots her beloved with another girl - then turns her sadness into sparkling pop, perfect for solo freakouts.

27 The National

"Bloodbuzz Ohio"

"I still owe money to the money to the money I owe," croons Matt Berninger, singing so seductively you'll want to toss him a few bucks.

28 Band of Horses

"Laredo"

ROAD-TRIP ANTHEM

A country-rock ballad about needing to get away, built around shimmering guitars that go on for miles.

29 Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers

"The Trip to Pirate's Cove"

A classic Petty road story, outfitted with black-ice organ and sneering guitar.

30 Jakob Dylan

"Nothing but the Whole Wide World"

Dylan delivers a roots-folk lullaby with a hushed melody James Taylor would kill to have written.

31 Gil Scott-Heron

"I'm New Here"

The long-lost Seventies rap pioneer rasps his way through an acoustic version of a Smog ballad. He turns indie-rock melancholy into the darkest, deepest country blues.

Best Videos of 2010

"Telephone"

Lady Gaga and Beyoncé

The divas make like ultrafab versions of Thelma and Louise, dancing (and murdering) their way through dozens of costumes on a gloriously trashy nine-and-a-half-minute clip that's more entertaining than most feature films.

"The Wilderness Downtown"

Arcade Fire

Set to the gorgeous, sweeping "We Used to Wait," this forward-thinking art film uses Google Maps images of your childhood neighborhood - with amazing, poignant results.

"Who's That Brown"

Das Racist

The Brooklyn MCs make a hilarious clip that's also a fully playable video game - like Nintendo's *Double Dragon*, but set in Williamsburg.

"This Too Shall Pass"

OK Go

The Chicago guys step up their game, grooving with a dazzling Rube Goldberg machine that smashes TVs and triggers paint-spewing cannons.

"Drunk Girls"

LCD Soundsystem

Spike Jonze sics hell-raising pandas on LCD, and singer James Murphy is bound with tape and forcibly dressed in drag. Raucous, anarchistic fun.

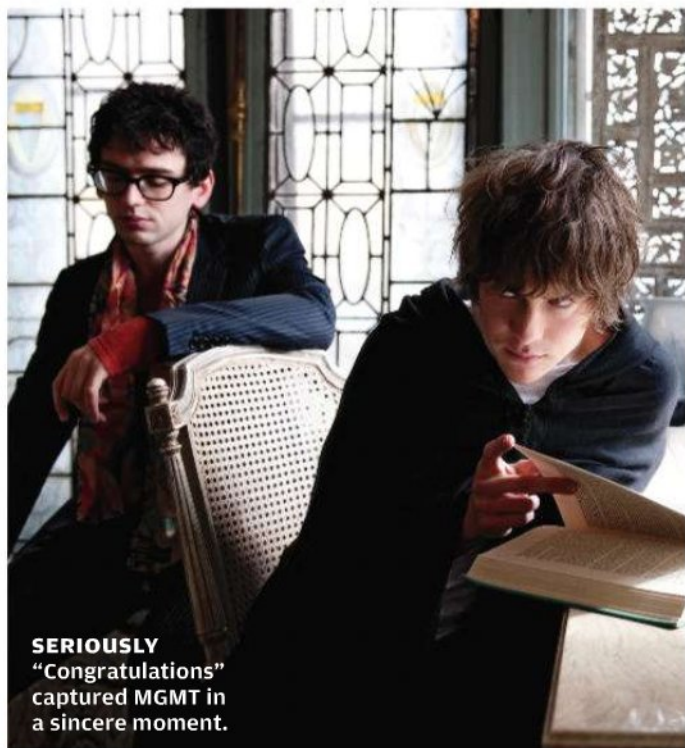


Lady Gaga

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SERIOUSLY
"Congratulations"
captured MGMT in
a sincere moment.

32 Die Antwoord
"Enter the Ninja"

The year's freakiest rap song: Three South Africans mix machine-gun flows with warped hooks, suggesting Eminem's "Lose Yourself" on mescaline.

33 Wavves
"Post Acid" **SURF-ROCK FREAKS**

The San Diego trio turn in a sweetly psychedelic punk nugget: part Buzzcocks, part acid-damaged beach rock.

34 Gorillaz feat. Mos Def and Bobby Womack
"Stylo"

Your favorite cartoon primates cook up a disco jam that's sexy enough to make Donna Summer sigh with pleasure. And that synth-bass line? Unstoppable.

35 Massive Attack feat. Hope Sandoval
"Paradise Circus"

The U.K. trip-hoppers call in guest moaner Hope Sandoval for a narcotic ballad that's both surreal and unnervingly erotic.

36 Drake feat. Nicki Minaj
"Up All Night"

One of the year's great driving songs, with Minaj "doing doughnuts in a six-speed."

37 Lloyd Banks feat. Juelz Santana
"Beamer, Benz, or Bentley"

Two New York badasses team up over the year's rawest beat to celebrate paying way too much in car insurance.

38 Spoon
"The Mystery Zone"

2010's most mesmerizing guitar groove – a dark, dubby burner with lyrics about basement gigs and lost love.

39 The Gaslight Anthem
"The Diamond Church Street Choir"

Brian Fallon triangulates doo-wop, Bruce Springsteen and New Jersey emo. Result: a finger-snapping ode to basement gigs and lost love.

40 Kanye West
"Power"

The first sign of how crazy *Twisted Fantasy* would be: 'Ye goes all schizoid while sampling King Crimson.

41 Junip
"In Every Direction"

Pale-voiced Swede José González kicks up the volume for a supremely pretty folk swirl.

42 Surfer Blood
"Floating Vibes"

Florida guys combine a Beach Boys-style surf tune with Nine-

ties alt-rock riffs. Why didn't anyone think of this before?

43 B.o.B feat. Bruno Mars
"Nothing on You" **BEST POP-RAP**

A nearly perfect pop-rap ballad, with the Atlanta MC telling his one and only, "You the whole package, plus you pay your taxes."

44 Neil Young
"Love and War"

"I've been in love, and I've seen a lot of war": Young wrestles with his two biggest topics – and meditates on his entire career.

45 The Rolling Stones
"Plundered My Soul"

An expertly reconstructed track from the *Exile on Main Street* sessions, with Keith Richards' damaged licks crying across the years.

46 MGMT
"Congratulations"

The psych-pop jokers let down their guard and rip off the Band for a hazily pretty sing-along about fast fame.

47 Kid Rock
"Born Free"

Rock throws on a fringed jacket and cuts a Seventies-rock anthem that's perfect for cruising in a vintage Chevy – or just pumping your fist.

48 Das Racist
"hahahaha jk?"

NYC trio transcending joke-rap status by making a song about transcending joke-rap status, set to a finely stoned beat.

49 Elizabeth Cook
"El Camino" **COUNTRY WIT**

A twangy, hilarious vignette about a schoolgirl who becomes powerless against the charms of a mulleted, El Camino-driving skeezeball.

50 Ke\$ha
"We R Who We R"

Over Dr. Luke's arena-electro beat, Ke\$ha takes stupid-savvy pop to bombastic heights.

Contributors: JON DOLAN, DAVID FRICKE, WILL HERMES, MELISSA MAERZ, JODY ROSEN, ROB SHEFFIELD, JONAH WEINER

Best Covers

"Angel Dance"
Robert Plant

Band of Joy's most joyful cut is an atmospheric roots-folk cover of a 1990 Los Lobos tune, with Plant moaning and groaning over mandolin and humid guitar riffs. The end result suggests an old-timey strip-club anthem.

"Sweet Virginia"
Jerry Lee Lewis and Keith Richards

The Killer changes "shit" to "shine," but that's the only polite thing about his Louisiana-honky-tonk take on the Rolling Stones' country biscuit.

"Wake Up Everybody"
John Legend and the Roots

The funk-soul band of your dreams gives this 1975 hit a sleek modern makeover, without sacrificing an ounce of warmth.

"It Takes a Muscle"
M.I.A.

This Maya curveball (originally cut in 1982 by Dutch group Spectral Display) is a doofy, reggae-fied charmer – and one of the sweetest things she's ever done.

"Not in Love" Crystal Castles and Robert Smith

With help from the Cure's frontman, the Canadian duo turn a forgotten arena-rock cut into a gothy burner that keeps building in intensity.



FROM TOP: JOSH CHEUSE; DAVE HOGAN/GETTY IMAGES

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a wicked good time

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JOHN'S L

A Remembrance

PHOTOGRAPHS BY



LAST DAYS

Directed by Yoko Ono

ANNE LEIBOVITZ

Ono and Lennon in
their kitchen at the
Dakota, New York,
December 3rd, 1980



Double Fantasy was a great joy for John and me. But it was intense as well, since we were trying to finish it for the Christmas release. John knew what I was up against and protected me to the end. If it weren't for that, the record would not have been a dialogue between a man and a woman. But if the record was not a dialogue between a man and a woman, John would have refused to do the record at all. That's how it was.

Nobody was unkind to me. But there was a strong feeling that this record should have been just John, and I was an extra thing that they had to put up with. I hear a big *yes!* from you guys who are reading this. So you must understand how people at the time also felt.

Because of that delicate situation, John had to do his own thing and protect me at the same time. Even with his quick, astute observation and total power in the studio, that was not easy. He was trying to protect a proud lioness with a sheep's heart, without so much as letting her know that's what he was doing. Now, looking back, I get that as clear as a bell.

By the *Double Fantasy* sessions, I was pretty used to how you do it in rock. But in a pressured situation, I went back to being my old classical avant-garde self. A guitarist was having a difficult time finding a good solo for one of my songs. It was late at night and I just quickly wrote musical notes on a piece of paper and asked him if he would play that for the solo. Sometime before that, I had been told by someone that he read music. So I thought it was more polite to give him a scribble of musical notations than showing him what I wanted on the piano, in which case the whole group would know what I was doing. He just said, "I can't play this," to John. John looked at me, looked at the guitarist and left the room, beckoning me to follow him. Outside the control room, he said, "Remember? You should whisper to me!" I should whisper the music line in John's ear?! But in rock, you don't criticize the musicians for their solos. You just say, "That was good. But could we have one more, just in case? A bit lighter, possibly..." Something like that. So I knew I made a faux pas. I just said, "I know, I know," and let it go. That was that.

Then there was "Yes, I'm Your Angel"! I wanted to do it in 3/4. John said, "Let's do it rock, 4/4." So we did it in 4/4. When we finished all the tracks, John said, "So we did it! Anything, Yoko?" I told him that I actually still wanted to do "Angel" in 3/4. "Oh

... right! I never should have opened me mouth! So let's get them back." The musicians had all packed and left the studio already. Andy, the drummer, had to come back from Bermuda! But we did "Yes, I'm Your Angel" in 3/4. The problem was, the one we did in 4/4 sounded much better. The musicians played both 4/4 and 3/4 versions perfectly. So it was not their fault. Something about doing it in 3/4 was so predictable for this kind of song, it sounded more contrived than the 4/4 version, which surprised us as being more fresh when compared with the 3/4. So we went back to using the 4/4 we did anyway. The musicians were all gracious about it, but I don't think I won any popularity contest or anything! I thought nothing of that at the time. Artists have the right to aim for perfection. But now I see that John was helping me, without making a thing about it.

One day, in the middle of making *Double Fantasy*, the engineers told us they needed two hours to fix the board. So we should go out for a while. Take a walk. Great! After being in the dark studio for ages, the outside made us squint. It was like spring! A beautiful, beautiful day. The sky was shining blue. We felt like two kids skipping class. John decided that we would go into Saks Fifth Avenue. He went through a few counters and stopped at the glasses: "We should get one for you." He picked a pair out—large black wraparound shades—and put them on me. Strangely, he started to look rather serious. "What?" "You should wear these all the time." I thought that was silly and wanted to laugh, but stopped short. He was gazing. It reminded me of the first time I saw him gazing at my "Painting to Hammer a Nail In" in the Indica gallery. This time he was gazing at me wearing the glasses he picked for me. "Why?" I asked with my eyes. He just took my hand and we walked quickly toward the exit. It was time to go back to the studio. I immediately forgot the incident totally. Later, those were the glasses I wore to face the world. I heard John saying, "Keep your chin up. Never let them know that they got you!" So even after his passing, he was still protecting and helping me.

We were both very verbal people. Once we were on the elevator talking away, and forgot that we didn't push the button. The elevator was still on the ground floor for the longest time without us noticing. Finally, the door opened and a lady came in and we noticed what we did. We were just chatting away. Why did we have so much to talk about? Maybe because it was just the two of us. We burned the bridge, and we didn't have anybody else except each other. John didn't mind that at all. It probably had to do with the fact that he had met and shook hands with so many people in the Beatles' tour days, not seeing people so much felt fresh.

We were also very silent people, too. We didn't have to say anything. Just by looking at each other we knew what the other was thinking. The more the world hated us, the more we became fiercely protective of each other. I loved the way he looked toward the end: "Keep your chin up. Don't let anybody see that they got you!" I always nodded when he said that. But when he was alone, I caught him pondering with a faraway look of a young/old soldier who remembered it all. One day, he even said, "Look, if I ever die, make sure to..." and he gave me precise instructions on what I had to do to the Beatles' outtakes. "Make sure to do that." I thought it was remarkable that he was still concerned about his old takes. Artist to artist, I liked that remark at the time.

One night, he was sobbing. "Don't leave me alone. Don't die on me." "But, John, I'm older than you, so it's natural that I go first." "No, you can't. You just can't." But another day he said very calmly, "If you died, I'm going to make a soup out of you, and drink it. We will finally be one body then." He seemed to have been inspired by that idea, and said it to people who were working for us. "You know, if Yoko died, I'm going to make a soup out of her, and drink it..." They all looked stone-faced, as if he didn't say anything unusual. John sounded like a little boy when he was saying that. A little boy who thought of a great idea.



THE LAST WEEKEND

Ono and Lennon on December 8th, 1980: "[It] was very quiet. The sky was cloudy in a restful way. And the town seemed as though it was asleep."

The two of us as a couple were not very popular, to put it mildly. Everybody around us seemed to be thinking if it weren't for John being with me, the Beatles would get back together again. While we were separated, John told me that he had to do an interview to say that the Beatles could get back together. He told me that the record company felt they had no chance to sell his record if he hadn't done that. So he did an interview and sent a copy to me. When you watch that famous video interview, you see that John was being rather awkward. He tried to be funny – that was always an out. For a guy like John to finally do an interview he didn't believe in, he must have felt really pressured. I thought if we separated, maybe he will get back to being the popular guy he had once been. That was not the only reason I wanted the separation. I had enough, too, of being hated by everybody in the world. The situation was hell. It was getting dangerous for me. For John, it was affecting the sales of his albums. That meant a big dent in his career. I felt guilty. But John was gung-ho about us being together. So we went back to sit in hell and enjoy it. Hell! What's hell?

"We'll be happy wherever we are as long as we are together. Do we care? No, Yoko. We don't, do we? We'll be on rocking chairs in Cornwall when we get old, and wait for Sean's postcards."

In the *Double Fantasy* period, he got his creative juices back, and was totally alive writing great songs and recording them. But in the middle of the night, he was having nightmares of us separating again. This time, by death.

I did the artwork for the *Double Fantasy* cover. I selected a good font for the words. And I used two photos by Shinoyama for the front and back of the LP, except I made them black and white. The original photos were in color. I thought it would reflect the grittiness of the album by making it black and white. I thought it would send the message out that it was a documentary and not fiction. But "Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans," as John said. When I look at the cover now, I wonder if there was more to the story in making it black and white that was not in my calculation.

The album was finished. We put out the single "(Just Like) Starting Over." But the single did not go to Number One. I went to John, who was sitting in a comfortable chair reading the papers. "John, I'm sorry. The single only went to Number Eight." "It won't move?" "No." He was thinking for a second, looking at me. Then he said, "It's all right. We have the family."

He had grand plans if the single went to Number One. Being English through and through, John had planned to take Sean and I to England on the *QE 2*. He wanted to show Sean to Aunt Mimi, and also say hello to Liverpool. But now we had to chuck that plan altogether.

The last weekend was very quiet. The sky was cloudy in a restful way. And the town seemed as though it was asleep.

Saturday started with John listening to "Walking on Thin Ice." As John was so focused on it, I went out to the newsstand and suddenly thought I should get John some chocolates as a surprise. He loved chocolates, but it was not in our sugarless diet at that point. After the drug binges of the Sixties, John wanted both of us to clean up and be healthy "for Sean's sake too." But that Saturday, the last Saturday John would enjoy, I thought of getting him some chocolate and surprising him. I don't know why I thought that. I didn't like chocolates at all then, so I wasn't suffering not eating them. I got some and came home. As I came out of the elevator, I was surprised by John opening the door to the apartment before I rang the bell. "How did you know I was coming back just now?" "Oh, I know when you're back." He was so happy that I got him the chocolates. I remember how he smiled.

The same day, John wanted all my artwork to be brought upstairs from the basement to the white room. This was not the first

"I rushed to the car and saw John signing an autograph for a guy in front of the Dakota. I remember being irritable: 'Why one more?'"

time he asked for it, but he asked for it on this weekend again. "It's ridiculous. We have those great works, and we are leaving them in the basement. I want to enjoy them." For me, it was boring to have to see my old works every day. As a result, my pieces were piled up in the basement storage covered in dust. In those days, I didn't particularly care about that. "John, can we do it after we finish the album? We are all so busy now." "No, we should do it now. You'll never do it otherwise." As he said it, there was a touch of sadness in his voice, as if he already knew we would never bring them upstairs. We didn't.

All day, John did not stop playing "Walking on Thin Ice." He played it over and over again. We still hadn't overdubbed the guitar solo, so I thought he was checking what to do with it. But it was unlike him that he took so much time on it. I went to sleep. When I woke up on Sunday morning, he was still playing "Walking on Thin Ice," as he looked over the park. I knew the song was a good song. But I was just thinking of what else should be done musically. Never thought deeper than that at the time. Only just recently, it occurred to me that maybe John was aware of the song in a different light.

*Walking on thin ice
I'm paying the price
For throwing the dice in the air.*

But it goes into the middle eight after the second verse:

*I may cry someday,
But the tears will dry whichever way. . .
And when our hearts return to ashes
It'll be just a story.*

I hadn't realized that it said "I may cry someday," not "YOU may cry someday" or "WE may cry someday."

What was I thinking?! John probably noticed it as he listened to the song that weekend, so intently. Was that what made him keep on listening? Did we know something? John? Me? Death was one thing we didn't discuss that weekend. But it was around us like a thick fog.

The last Sunday. I'm glad in a way that we didn't know that it was our last Sunday together, so we could have had a semblance of normalcy. But it turned out that it was not a normal Sunday at all. Something was starting to happen, like the dead silence before a tsunami. The air was getting tenser and tenser, denser and denser. Then, I distinctly saw airwaves in the room. It was wiggly lines, like on the heart monitor next to the hospital bed, just before it becomes a flat straight line. "John, are you all right?" I asked through the density. He just nodded and kept listening to "Walking on Thin Ice," playing it loud. Walking on thin ice. Walking on thin ice . . . "John, John, *arrrre youuuu alllll riight?*" I heard my voice vibrating. I could not go near John, for some reason. WALKING ON THIN ICE. WALKING ON THIN ICE. WALKING ON THIN ICE. I realized that both of us were in a strange dimension in a weird time zone, as if we were in a dream. Then it all stopped. I went into a long and shallow sleep, with John over me, kissing me tenderly.

Monday. The very last day of John's life, we woke up to a shiny blue sky spreading over Central Park. The day had an air of bright eyes and bushy tails. John and I remembered that we had a full schedule. Annie Leibovitz's photo session, RKO radio show, and studio work from 6 p.m. John liked being prompt. John was English, I was Japanese. The result was both of us possessed extreme austerity and hilarity back to back. The sky was turning gray in the afternoon. And John kept talking to the RKO radio guy, cramming in a lot of things. We nearly became late for the studio. I rushed into the car and saw John still signing an autograph for a guy in front of the Dakota. "John, we'll be late!" I remember being a bit irritable. "Why one more autograph?" I thought. John said something like, "OK," and rushed into the car, sat next to me and held my hand as usual. The car drove off.

I know I speak of his hands a lot. I loved his hands. He used to say he had wanted hands like Jean Cocteau – long and slim fingers. But I grew up surrounded by cousins with those aristocratic hands. I loved John's, clean, strong, working-class hands that grabbed me whenever there was a chance.

The studio work went until late at night. In a room next to the control room, just before we left the studio, John looked at me. I looked at him. His eyes had an intensity of a guy about to tell me something important. "Yes?" I asked. And I will never forget how with a deep, soft voice, as if to carve his words in my mind, he said the most beautiful things to me. "Oh," I said after a while, and looked away, feeling a bit embarrassed.

In my mind, hearing something like that from your man when you were way over 40 . . . well . . . I was a very lucky woman, I thought. Even now, I see his piercing eyes in my mind. I don't know why he decided, at that very moment, to say all that as if he wanted me to remember it forever. Did it matter that the whole world hated you if your guy loved you that much? Who cares if you had to live in hell with him? Some couples might be lucky to live in heaven. John and my heaven was in Hell. And we loved it. We would not have wanted it any other way.

YOKO ONO
London, October 18th, 2010

THE LAST INTERVIEW

By Jonathan Cott

ON THE EVENING OF FRIDAY, DECEMBER 5TH, 1980, John Lennon spoke to ROLLING STONE editor Jonathan Cott for more than nine hours at his apartment on New York's Upper West Side and at the Record Plant recording studio. Three nights later, Lennon would be murdered as he was returning home from a mixing session. The interview had originally been scheduled to run as the cover story of the first issue of 1981, but after Lennon's killing, Cott instead wrote an obituary for Lennon and ended up using very little from their conversations. In fact, he never even fully transcribed his tape. On the 30th anniversary of Lennon's death, we present, for the first time, the full text of Lennon's last major print interview: the joyous, outrageously funny, inspiring, fearless and subversive conversation Lennon shared with us that night, as he was preparing to jump back into the lime-light after five years of private life with Yoko and their young son, Sean.



STARTING OVER

December 8th, 1980. "I wasn't hiding," Lennon said of his five-year layoff. "We had wanted a child and weren't going to blow it."



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ELCOME TO THE inner sanctum!" said John Lennon, as he greeted me with high-spirited, mock ceremoniousness in Yoko Ono's beautiful cloud-ceilinged office in their Dakota apartment. It was December 5th, 1980. I sat down on a couch next to Yoko, and she began telling me how their collaborative new album, *Double Fantasy*, came about: The previous spring, John and their son, Sean, were vacationing for three weeks in Bermuda while Yoko stayed home "sorting out business," as she put it. While in Bermuda, John phoned her to say that he had taken Sean to the botanical gardens and had come across a flower called a Double Fantasy. "It's a type of freesia," John would later say, "but what it means to us is that if two people picture the same image at the same time, that is the secret."

"I was at a dance club one night in Bermuda," John interrupted as he sat down on the couch, and Yoko got up to bring coffee. "Upstairs, they were playing disco, and downstairs I suddenly heard 'Rock Lobster' by the B-52's for the first time. Do you know it? It sounds just like Yoko's music, so I said to myself, 'It's time to get out the old ax and wake the wife up!'" She and John spoke on the phone every day and sang each other the songs they had composed in between calls.

"I've heard," I said to John, "that you've had a guitar hanging on the wall behind your bed for the past five or six years, and that you only recently took it down to play on *Double Fantasy*."

"I bought this beautiful electric guitar, round about the period I got back with Yoko and had the baby," John said. "It's not a normal guitar; it doesn't have a body. It's just an arm and this tube-like, toboggan-looking thing, and you can lengthen the top for the balance of it if you're sitting or standing up. I played it a little, then just hung it up behind the bed, but I'd look at it every now and then, because it had never done a professional thing, it had never really been played. I didn't want to hide it the way one would hide an instrument because it was too painful to look at – like, Artie Shaw went through a big thing and never played his clarinet again. But I used to look at it and think, 'Will I ever pull it down?'"

"Next to it on the wall I'd placed a wooden number nine and a dagger Yoko had given me – a dagger made out of a bread knife from the American Civil War, to cut away the bad vibes, to cut

away the past symbolically. It was just like a picture that hangs there but you never really see, and then recently I realized, 'Oh, goody! I can finally find out what this guitar is all about,' and I took it down and used it in making *Double Fantasy*."

"I've been playing *Double Fantasy* over and over," I said, getting ready to ply him with another question. John looked at me with a time- and interview-stopping smile. "How are you?" he asked. "It's been like a reunion for us these last few weeks. We've seen Ethan Russell, who's doing a videotape of a couple of the new songs, and Annie Leibovitz was here. She took my first ROLLING STONE cover photo. It's been fun seeing everyone we used to know and doing it all again – we've all survived. When did we first meet?"

"I met you and Yoko on September 17th, 1968," I said, remembering the first of many future encounters. I was just a lucky guy, at the right place at the right time. John had decided to become more "public" and to demystify his Beatles persona. He and Yoko, whom he'd met in November 1966, were preparing for the Amsterdam and Montreal bed-ins for peace, and were soon to release *Two Virgins*, the first of their experimental record collaborations with its Shakespearean "noises, sounds and sweet airs." The album cover – the infamous nude portrait of them – was to grace the pages of ROLLING STONE's first-anniversary issue. John had just discovered the then-impooverished San Francisco-based magazine, and he'd agreed to give ROLLING STONE the first of his "coming-out" interviews. As "European editor," I was asked to visit John and Yoko and to take along a photographer (Ethan Russell, who later took the photos for the *Let It Be* book that accompanied the album). So, nervous and excited, we met John and Yoko at their temporary basement flat in London.

First impressions are usually the most accurate, and John was graceful, charming, exuberant, direct and playful; I remember noticing how he wrote little reminders to himself in the wonderfully absorbed way that a child paints the sun. He was due at a recording session in a half-hour to work on the White Album, so we had agreed to meet the next day to do the interview, but John and Yoko instead invited Ethan and me to attend that day's session for "Birthday" and "Glass Onion" at Abbey Road Studios. (I remember making myself scarce behind one of the giant studio

"People want dead heroes, like Sid Vicious and James Dean. I'm not interested in being a dead hero, so forget 'em."

speakers in order not to raise the hackles of the other visibly disconcerted three Beatles.)

Every new encounter with John brought a new perspective. Once, in 1971, I ran into John and Yoko in New York. A friend and I had gone to see the film *Carnal Knowledge*, and afterward we bumped into the Lennons in the lobby. Accompanied by the yippie activist Jerry Rubin and a friend of his, they invited us to drive down with them to Ratner's restaurant on the Lower East Side for blintzes, whereupon a beatific, long-haired young man approached our table and wordlessly handed John a card inscribed with a pithy saying of the yogi Meher Baba. Rubin drew

Contributing editor JONATHAN COTT conducted ROLLING STONE's first interview with John Lennon, in 1968.

a swastika on the back of the card, got up, and gave it back to the man. When he returned, John admonished him gently, saying that that wasn't the way to change someone's consciousness. Acerbic and skeptical as he could often be, John Lennon never lost his sense of compassion.

Almost 10 years later, I was again talking to John, and he was as gracious and witty as the first time I met him. "I guess I should describe to the readers what you're wearing, John," I said. "Let me help you out," he offered, then intoned wryly, "You can see the glasses he's wearing. They're normal, plastic, blue-frame glasses. Nothing like the famous wire-rimmed Lennon glasses that he stopped using in 1973. He's wearing needle-cord pants, the same black cowboy boots he'd had made in Nudie's in 1973, a Calvin Klein sweater and a torn Mick Jagger T-shirt that he got when the Stones toured in 1970 or so. And around his neck is a small, three-part diamond heart necklace that he bought as a makeup present after an argument with Yoko many years ago and that she later gave back to him in a kind of ritual. Will that do?"

"But I know you've got a Monday deadline, so let's get boogieing!"

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"*Double Fantasy* is the first recording you've made in five years, and, to quote from your song 'The Ballad of John and Yoko,' 'It's good to have the both of you back.'"

But the illusion that I was cut off from society is a joke. I was just the same as any of the rest of you; I was working from nine to five – baking bread and changing some nappies and dealing with the baby. People keep asking, "Why did you go underground, why were you hiding?" But I wasn't hiding. I went to Singapore, South Africa, Hong Kong, Bermuda. I've been everywhere in the bloody universe. And I did fairly average things, I went to the movies.

But you weren't writing a lot of songs during those years.

I didn't write a damn thing.... You know, it was a big event for us to have a baby – people might forget how hard we tried to have one and how many miscarriages we had and near-death scenes for Yoko... and we actually had a stillborn child and a lot of problems with drugs, a lot of personal and public problems brought on by ourselves and with help from our friends. But, whatever. We put ourselves in situations that were stressful, but we managed to have the child that we tried to have for 10 years, and, my God, we weren't going to blow it. We didn't move for a year, and I took up yoga with the gray-haired lady on TV [laughs].

You can't really win. People criticized you for not writing and recording, but it's sometimes forgotten that your three previous albums – "Some Time in New York City," "Walls and Bridges" and "Rock 'N' Roll" – weren't universally praised... especially the agitprop "Some Time in New York City," which included songs like "Attica State," "Sunday Bloody Sunday" and "Woman Is the Nigger of the World."

Yeah, that was the one that really upset everyone. Yoko calls it "Bertolt Brecht," but, as usual, I didn't know who he was until she took me to see Richard Foreman's production of *The Threepenny Opera* four years ago, and then I saw the album in that light. I was always irritated by the rushness of sound on it, but I was consciously doing it like a newspaper where you get the misprints, the times and the facts aren't quite right, and there's that you've-got-to-get-it-out-by-Friday attitude.

But I've been attacked many, many times... and right from the beginning: "From Me to You" was "below-par Beatles," don't forget that. That was the review in the NME [*New Musical Express*]. Jesus Christ, I'm sorry. Maybe it wasn't as good as "Please Please Me," I don't know, but "below par"? I'll never forget that one. And you know how bad the reviews were of our Plastic Ono albums? They shredded us! "Self-indulgent, simplistic whining"



WATCHING THE WHEELS

"God help Bruce Springsteen when they decide he's no longer God," said Lennon. "When he gets down to facing his success and growing older, they'll turn on him."

– that was the main gist. Because those albums were about ourselves, you see, and not about Ziggy Stardust or Tommy....And *Mind Games*, they hated it.

But it's not just me. Take Mick, for instance. Mick's put out consistently good work for 20 years, and will they give him a break? Will they ever say, "Look at him, he's number one, he's 37 and he has a beautiful song, 'Emotional Rescue,' it's up there"? I enjoyed it, a lot of people enjoyed it. And God help Bruce Springsteen when they decide he's no longer God. I haven't seen him, but I've heard such good things about him. Right now his fans are happy. He's told them about being drunk and chasing girls

and cars and everything, and that's about the level they enjoy. But when he gets down to facing his own success and growing older and having to produce it again and again, they'll turn on him, and I hope he survives it. All he has to do is look at me or at Mick. So it goes up and down, up and down – of course it does, but what are we, machines? What do they want from the guy? Do they want him to kill himself onstage? Do they want me and Yoko to fuck onstage or kill ourselves onstage? But when they criticized "From Me to You" as below-par Beatles, that's when I first realized you've got to keep it up, there's some sort of system where you get on the wheel and you've got to keep going around.

Watching the wheels. What are those wheels?

The whole universe is a wheel, right? Wheels going round and round. They're my own wheels, mainly, but, you know, watching meself is like watching everybody else. And I watch meself through my child too.

The thing about the child is...it's still hard. I'm not the greatest dad on Earth, I'm doing me best. But I'm a very irritable guy, and I get depressed. I'm up and down, up and down, and he's had to deal with that too – withdrawing from him and then giving, and withdrawing and giving. I don't know how much it will affect him in later life, but I've been physically there.

We're all selfish, but I think so-called artists are completely selfish: To put Yoko or Sean or the cat or anybody in mind other than meself – me and my ups and downs and my little tiddly problems – is a strain. Of course, there's a reward and a joy, but still...

So you fight against your natural selfish instincts.

Yeah, the same as taking drugs or eating bad food or not doing exercise. It's as hard as that to give to a child, it's not natural at all. Maybe it's the way we were all brought up, but it's very hard to think about somebody else, even your own child, to really think about him.

But you're thinking about him in a song like "Beautiful Boy."

Yeah, but that's easy...it's painting. Gauguin was stuck in fucking Tahiti, painting a big picture for his daughter – if the movie version I saw was true, right? So he's in fucking Tahiti painting a picture for her, she dies in Denmark, she didn't see him for 20 years, he has VD and is going out of his mind in Tahiti – he dies and the painting gets burned anyway, so nobody ever sees the masterpiece of his fucking life. And I'm always thinking things like that. So I write a song about the child, but it would have done better for me to spend the time I wrote the fucking song actually playing ball with him. The hardest thing for me to do is play....I can do everything else.

You can't play?

Play, I can't. I try and invent things. I can draw, I can watch TV with him. I'm great at that – I can watch any garbage, as long as I don't have to move around, and I can talk and read to him and go out and take him with me for a coffee and things like that.

That's weird, because your drawings and so many of the songs you've written are really playful.

That probably came from Paul more than from me.

What about "Good Morning Good Morning"? That's one of yours. It's a great song – an older guy roaming aimlessly around town after work, who doesn't want to go home and has nothing to say, but it's OK.

Oh, that was just an exercise. I only had about a week to write songs for *Pepper*. "Good Morning Good Morning" was a Kellogg's Corn Flakes ad at the time – that's how desperate I was for a song.

What I realized when I read "Lennon Remembers" [John's legendary 1970 interview with Jann Wenner] or the new *Playboy* interview [conducted by David Sheff September 8th-28th, 1980] was that I'm always complaining about how hard it is to write or how much I suffer when I'm writing – that almost every song I've ever written has been absolute torture.

Most of them were torture?

Absolutely. I always think there's nothing there, it's shit, it's no good, it's not coming out, this is garbage...and even if it does come out, I think, "What the hell is it anyway?"

That sounds a bit constipated, in a way.

It's just stupid. I just think, "That was tough. Jesus, I was in a bad way then" [laughs]...except for the 10 or so songs the gods give you and that come out of nowhere.

Did the songs you wrote for "Double Fantasy" come easier?

Not really. It actually took me five years for them to come out. Constipated for five years, and then diarrhea for three weeks [laughs]! The physical writing was within a three-week period.

There's a Zen story that Yoko once told me – and I think I might have told it in "Lennon Remembers" or "Playboy Forgets": A king sent his messenger to an artist to request a painting, he paid the artist the money, and the painter said, "OK, come back." So a year goes by, and the messenger comes back and tells him, "The king's waiting for his painting," and the painter says, "Oh, hold on," and whips it off right in front of him and says, "Here." And the messenger says, "What's this? The king paid you 20,000 bucks for this shit, and you knock it off in five minutes?" And the painter replies, "Yeah, but I spent 10 years thinking about it." And there's no way I could have written the *Double Fantasy* songs without those five years.



AT THIS POINT, YOKO COMES INTO the room to announce that someone who says he's George Harrison just telephoned and wanted to come over. "Of course it's not George," John mutters. "He was probably on acid," says Yoko. "I said to him, 'Can I ask you some questions?' 'No,' the guy said, 'I can't be bothered with all that, Yoko.' So I hung up and made a call to George's number and found out that George was, in fact, sleeping." I start to laugh, and John says, "We laugh at it too, you know. Jesus Christ. If it wasn't a laugh, we'd go crazy, wouldn't we?"

Yoko takes this opportunity to hand John a recent copy of Japanese *Playboy* that features an article about them. "It's nice of them to show just the back of the baby," John remarks about one of the photos. "I don't want pictures of Sean going around. Most stars, as soon as they have a baby, put it on the front page: 'I've just had a baby!' I'm not interested in that. It's dangerous. You know, we make no pretense of being average Tom, Dicks or Harry – we make no pretense of living in a small cottage or of trying to make our child into an average child. I tried that game with my son Julian, sending him to a comprehensive working-class school, mixing with the people, but the people spat and shit on him because he was famous, as people are wont to do. So his mother had to finally turn around and tell me to piss off: 'I'm sending him to a private school, the kid is suffering here.'"

John now thumbs through *Playboy*. "Take a look at these Japanese tits in the front half of the magazine," he says, as he generously shares the issue with me. "They're beautiful. They're not allowed to show pussy, only breasts. Before the Christians got there, the Japanese were absolutely free sexually, like the Tahitians – not in an immoral way; it was natural to them. "And it's the Christians that changed that?" I asked. "Yeah," John replied, "the Christians don't let you have cock and balls. It's the Judeo-Christians, just to get you in it too." "You're right," I confess, "it's all my fault!" "Never mind, never mind," John says, patting me on the shoulder. "But we'd better get on with this. Ask away!"

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It's interesting that no rock & roll star I can think of has made an album with his wife or whomever and given her 50 percent of the disc.

It's the first time we've done it this way. I know we've made albums together before, like *Live Peace in Toronto 1969* where I had one side and Yoko had the other. But *Double Fantasy* is a dialogue, and we have resurrected ourselves, in a way, as John and Yoko – not as John ex-Beatle and Yoko and the Plastic Ono Band. It's just the two of us, and our position was that, if the record didn't sell, it meant people didn't want to know about John and Yoko – either they didn't want John anymore or they didn't want John with Yoko or maybe they just wanted Yoko, or whatever. But if they didn't want the two of us, we weren't interest-

ed. Throughout my career, I've selected to work with – for more than a one-night stand, say, with David Bowie or Elton John – only two people: Paul McCartney and Yoko Ono. I brought Paul into the original group, the Quarrymen, he brought George in, and George brought Ringo in. And the second person who interested me as an artist and somebody I could work with was Yoko Ono. That ain't bad picking.

Right now, the public is our only criterion: You can aim for a small public, a medium public, but for meself, I like a large public. And I made my decision in art school, if I'm going to be an artist of whatever description, I want the maximum exposure, not just paint-your-little-pictures-in-the-attic-and-don't-show-them-to-anybody.

When I arrived in art school, there were lots of artsy-fartsy guys and girls, mainly guys, going round with paint on their jeans and looking just like artists. And they all had lots to talk about and knew all about every damn paintbrush, and they talked about aesthetics, but they all ended up being art teachers or Sunday painters. I got nothing from art school except for a lot of women, a lot of drink and the freedom to be at college and have fun. I enjoyed it like hell, but for art, I never learned a damn thing.

You've always had a unique, playful drawing style – just think of your book "In His Own Write" or the album cover and inner sleeve of "Walls and Bridges" or your immediately identifiable "Lennon-esque" cartoons.

I did the *Walls and Bridges* drawings when I was 10 or 11. But I found at art school that they tried to knock it out of me. They tried to stop me from drawing how I draw naturally, which I wouldn't let them do. But I never developed it further than cartoons. Somebody once said that cartoonists are people with a good creative gift who are scared of failure as painters, so they make it comedic. My cartoons, to me, are like Japanese brush paintings – if you can't get it in one line, rip it up. Yoko got me into that notion a little when we met, and when she saw that I drew, she'd say, "That's how they do it in Japan, you don't have to make changes.... This is it!"

Yoko and I come from different kinds of backgrounds, but basically, we both need this communication. I'm not interested in small, elite groups following or kowtowing to me. I'm interested in communicating whatever it is I want to say or produce

"I'm not interested in small, elite groups following me. I want to communicate in the maximum possible way, and rock & roll is it."

in the maximum possible way, and rock & roll is it, as far as I'm concerned. It's like that image of watching a giraffe going by the window. People are always just seeing little bits of it, but I try and see the whole, not just in my own life, but the whole universe, the whole game. That's what it's all about, isn't it? So whether I'm working with Paul or Yoko, it's all toward the same end, whatever that is – self-expression, communication or just being like a tree, flowering and withering and flowering and withering.

On Yoko's song "Hard Times Are Over," there seems to be what sounds like a gospel group singing behind Yoko's voice.

There is a gospel group [the Benny Cummings Singers and the Kings Temple Choir] singing on it. They were beautiful. Just

before the take, they suddenly all took each other's hands, and Yoko was really crying, and I was emotional because it's right up our alley – whether it's Jesus or Buddha, for us it's all right, either one will do, any of them are all right by us. So there they were, holding hands before the take, and they were singing "Thank you, Jesus, thank you, Lord," and I was like, "Put the tape on! Are you getting this?" And that's what you hear, exactly as it happened – "Thank you, Jesus, thank you, Lord" – and then they go right into singing the song.

At the end of the session, they thanked God, they thanked our co-producer Jack Douglas, they thanked us for bringing them the work, and we thanked them. And it was the nearest I've ever been to a gospel church service – Phil Spector used to tell me about them – and I always wanted to go and experience it, but I was too scared to go. And that was the nearest I've ever been, and it was just beautiful.

It was a great working day, with the pressure on – get in the studio and get out – and all the children were there, kids and food and cookies and singing and "Praise the Lord." It was glorious. Putting the gospel choir on that song was a highlight of the session.

On "Double Fantasy," I noticed a mysterious and magical little sound collage that segues between your song "Watching the Wheels" and Yoko's charming, Thirties-like "Yes, I'm Your Angel." One hears what seem to be a hawker's voice, the sounds of a horse-driven carriage, then a door slamming and a few musical phrases played by a piano and violin in a restaurant.

I'll tell you what it is. One of the voices is me going, "God bless you, man, thank you, man, cross my palm with silver, you've got a lucky face," which is what the English guys who beg or want a tip say, and that's what you hear me mumbling. And then we re-created the sounds of what Yoko and I call the Strawberries and Violin Room – the Palm Court at the Plaza hotel. We like to sit there occasionally and listen to the old violin and have a cup of tea and some strawberries. It's romantic. And so the picture is, there's this kind of street prophet, Hyde Park-corner-type guy who just watches the wheels going around. And people are throwing money in the hat. We faked that in the studio. We had friends of ours walking up and down, dropping coins in a hat. And he's saying, "Thank you, thank you," and then you get in the horse carriage and you go around New York and go into the hotel and the violins are playing and then this woman comes on and sings about being an angel.

In "Yes, I'm Your Angel," Yoko sings, "I'm in your pocket/You're in my locket/And we're so lucky in every way." And then what follows is your beautiful song, "Woman," which sounds a bit like a troubadour poem written to a medieval lady.

"Woman" came about because, one sunny afternoon in Bermuda, it suddenly hit me what women do for us. Not just what my Yoko does for me, although I was thinking in those personal terms...but any truth is universal. What dawned on me was everything I was taking for granted. Women really are the other half of the sky, as I whisper at the beginning of the song. It's a "we" or it ain't anything. The song reminds me of a Beatles track, though I wasn't trying to make it sound like a Beatles track. I did it as I did

"Girl" many years ago – it just sort of hit me like a flood, and it came out like that. "Woman" is the grown-up version of "Girl."

I know that Yoko is deeply interested in ancient Egyptian art and antiques, and that you have a small collection of it in your home. Regarding "the other half of the sky," it's interesting that in ancient Egyptian mythology, the Sky was personified as a goddess – she wasn't Mother Earth – and the Earth was personified as a god.

But I do call Yoko "Mother," like our president-elect [Ronald Reagan] calls his wife "Mommy." And for those childless people who find that peculiar, it's because, in general, when you have a child around the house, you tend to refer to each other that way.

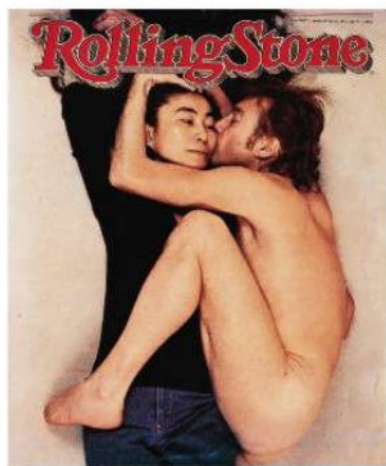
Yoko calls me "Daddy" – it could be Freudian, but it could also mean that Sean refers to me as "Daddy." Occasionally I call her "Mother," because I used to call her "Mother Superior" – if you check your Beatles Fab Four fucking records, "Happiness Is a Warm Gun." She is Mother Superior, she's Mother Earth, she's the mother of my child, she's my mother, she's my daughter.... The relationship goes through many levels, like most relationships. But it doesn't have any deep-seated strangeness about it.

People are always judging or criticizing you, or focusing on what you're trying to say on one little album, on one little song, but to me it's a lifetime's work. From the boyhood paintings and poetry to when I die – it's all part of one big production. And I don't have to announce that this album is part of a larger work: If it isn't obvious, then forget it. But I did put a little clue on the beginning of *Double Fantasy* – the bells on "(Just Like) Starting Over." The head of the album is a wishing bell of Yoko's. And it's like the beginning of "Mother" on the *Plastic Ono* album, which had a very slow death bell. So it's taken a long time to get from a slow church death bell to this sweet little wishing bell. And that's the connection. To me, my work is one piece.

In "Woman," you also sing, "Woman, I will try to express/My inner feelings and thankfulness/For showing me the meaning of success."

I'm not saying success as a famous artist and star is no good, and I'm not saying it's great. The thing about the "Working Class Hero" song that nobody ever got right was that it was supposed to be sardonic – it had nothing to do with socialism, it had to do with "If you want to go through that trip, you'll get up to where I am, and this is what you'll be." Because I've been successful as an artist, and have been happy and unhappy, and I've been unknown in Liverpool or Hamburg and been happy and unhappy. But what Yoko's taught me is what the real success is – the success of my personality, the success of my relationship with her and the child, my relationship with the world...and to be happy when I wake up. It has nothing to do with rock machinery or not rock machinery.

What am I supposed to be, some kind of martyr that's not supposed to be rich? Some asshole recently wrote a cover story about me in *Esquire*. [Journalist Laurence Shames' virulent article, "John Lennon, Where Are You?" appeared in the November 1980 issue of the magazine. In it, Shames wrote, "I was looking for the Lennon who had always shot his mouth off, who had offended everyone without having to try. My Lennon was a bitter clown, a man of extravagant error and vast resilience, a big baby, an often pathetic truth-seeker whose pained, goofy, earnest and paranoid visage was the emblem and conscience of his age.... The Lennon I would have found is a 40-year-old businessman who watches a lot of television, who's got \$150 million, a son he dotes on and a wife who intercepts his phone calls.... Is it true, John? Have you really given up?"] This guy spent 20 months looking at deeds and cows, and I'm making a record, and that asshole's looking at cows. For fuck's sake, man, what are they talking about? What should I have bought – slaves? Hookers? [Laughs] They've got minds like fucking sewers to sell magazines, to sell products that people can't afford to buy, that they don't need and have to replace every three months...and they're accusing me of what? That guy is the kind of person who used to be in love with you – you know, one of those people – and now hates you – a rejected lover. I don't even know the asshole, but he spent his whole time looking for an illusion that he created of me, and then got upset because he couldn't find it.



TWO VIRGINS

"I still drop into that tough street-kid stance," said Lennon. "I have to remember that I never really was one. That's what Yoko has taught me. I couldn't have done it alone."

These critics with the illusions they've created about artists – it's like idol worship. Like those little kids in Liverpool who only liked us when we were in Liverpool – a lot of them dropped us because we got big in Manchester, right? They thought we'd sold out. Then the English got upset because we got big in... what the hell is it? They only like people when they're on the way up, and when they're up there, they've got nothing else to do but shit on them. I cannot be on the way up again. What they want is dead heroes, like Sid Vicious and James Dean. I'm not interested in being a dead fucking hero.... So forget 'em, forget 'em.

You know what Eugene O'Neill said about critics? "I love every bone in their head." You see, the only way to deal with critics is to go over their heads direct to the public. That's what we did with the bed-ins and with our *Two Virgins* and *Plastic Ono* albums, and that's what we're doing now. And we hear from all kinds of people. One kid living up in Yorkshire wrote this heartfelt letter about being both Oriental and English and identifying with John and Yoko. The odd kid in the class. There are a lot of those kids who identify with us – as a couple, a biracial couple, who stand for love, peace, feminism and the positive things of the world. But the press are always looking at the neck of the giraffe as it goes past the window – that's how the game goes. So there's absolutely no way they can ever keep up.

Most of the petty resentment is mainly from Sixties rock critics who are reaching that age where the beer belly is getting larger, and they haven't got the guts of someone like Jon Landau [music critic, record producer and Bruce Springsteen's manager] to get out there and do it. I admire Lester Bangs, who's a musician as well as a critic, and I'm sure there's many times he shit all over me, and I'm sure Landau must have, in his time, both praised and hated me. I've had it both ways from all the major critics. But at least some of them do it. And as I said in "Lennon Remembers," and as I said in art school, I'm a doer, not a voyeur.... And I've got nothing to hide. Remember the song?

"Everybody's Got Something to Hide Except Me and My Monkey." It's one of my favorites: "Your inside is out, and your outside is in/Your outside is in, and your inside is out."

Right, but what did the critics say? "A bit simplistic, no imagery in it." Perhaps I should have said, "Your inside is like a whale juice dripping from the fermented foam of the teeny-boppers' VD in Times Square as I injected my white clown face with heroin and performed in red-leather knickers." Maybe then they'd like it, right?

That's great, that sounds like Allen Ginsberg.

Right, we can all do Ginsberg – and I like Ginsberg. But try shaving it all off and getting down to the nitty-gritty – that's what I always tried to write...except for the occasional "Walrus" bit. I'm not interested in describing a fucking tree. I'm interested in climbing it or being under it.

All the way through your work, there's this incredibly strong notion about inspiring people to be themselves and to come together to try to change things. I'm thinking here, obviously, of songs like "Give Peace a Chance," "Power to the People" and "Happy Xmas (War Is Over)."

It's still there. If you look on the vinyl around the new record's logo [on the 12-inch single "(Just Like) Starting Over"] – which all the kids have done already all over the world from Brazil to Australia to Poland – inside is written ONE WORLD, ONE PEOPLE. So we continue. "Give Peace a Chance," not "Shoot People for Peace." "All You Need is Love": It's damn hard, but I absolutely believe it.

[Cont. on 120]





ATTACK OF THE GLITTER GEEKS

How My Chemical Romance lost the gloom, embraced the DayGlo, and leaped ahead to rock's sci-fi future
By Brian Hiatt PHOTOGRAPH BY JAMES MINCHIN III



CHEMISTRY SET
Gerard Way, Mikey Way,
Frank Iero and Ray Toro
(from left) in Los Angeles



HERE'S something strange about Gerard Way up there in the spotlight, something new. It's not just that the My Chemical Romance frontman has traded his usual elaborately layered stage outfits for snug black jeans and a shredded black T-shirt, revealing a torso that's gone from chubby to Bowie-in-Berlin gaunt. It's not just that he's dyed his once-dark chin-length hair a crazed-clown red – a look that Way, 33, also rocked in his pre-fame teenage years, inspired by Kurt Cobain and Wayne Coyne.

No, what's really odd – as My Chem power through new songs and old on *Jimmy Kimmel Live*'s neon-studded outdoor stage on a brisk Hollywood night – is the jaunty, sexy thing Way is doing with his hips. It takes a few seconds to register, especially since he's singing one of his older, angrier songs, "I'm Not Okay (I Promise)": Is the 21st century's most theatrically moody rock star, the guy who, not long ago, sang about being "the savior of the broken, the beaten and the damned," actually... dancing?

He is – and it's all part of the plan. "In my head, that's what I dreamed up," Way says the next day, his hazel eyes lighting up at the mention of the moment. "I wanted the songs to mean something new. I wanted to feel free, I wanted to dance." Appropriately, the songs on My Chem's synth-infused new album, *Danger Days: The True Lives of the Fabulous Killjoys*, are the first to which dancing – rather than, say, headbanging, or weeping in the darkness of your suburban bedroom while silently cursing your parents – is a possible response.

With its hyperactive drum machines and laser-gun keyboards, *Danger Days* is the first My Chem record to capture the trashy energy of the comic books and sci-fi that the unabashedly dorky band mem-

Senior writer BRIAN HIATT profiled Nicki Minaj in RS 1119.



THE NEW WAY
Gerard Way in 2004 (below) and now. "To be more fearless onstage," he says, "I had to get in shape."



bers love. (Living out every 13-year-old nerd's most preposterous fantasies, Way is both a rock hero and an award-winning comic-book creator, thanks to his whimsical *Umbrella Academy* series, soon to be a movie.) Says Way, "Me and the guys decided to hijack all this shit: We're going to hijack beats, we're going to hijack hip-hop, electronica, we're going to hijack pop and pop art and use it all as a big art weapon."

But the album's sunnier tone is a risk for My Chem, who became idols to Gen Y kids too young for indie and too smart and/or miserable for Disneyfied pop thanks to the punchy, anthemic goth-punk metal of 2004's *Three Cheers for Sweet Revenge* and the doomy, Queen-meets-Floyd grandiosity of 2006's *The Black Parade*.

As they recorded, the album's producer, Rob Cavallo (who worked on Green Day's *American Idiot* as well as *The Black Parade*), took to comparing the shift to the leap U2 made with *Achtung Baby*. Says Way, "He was like, 'Up to that point, all you saw was dark and introspective U2, but then you got a band that wanted to have fun and also say something.'"

Adds Cavallo, "We actually said, 'Modern rock is dying or dead, so we're going to do something to make it new again.'" The idea was to imagine what My Chemical Romance – or indeed, rock itself – might sound like in 2019, and then hop forward. To muster the requisite 1.21 gigawatts, all it took was advice from a comic-book genius, a diet, four marriages, a baby or two – and an entire abandoned album.

ONE MORNING LAST JANUARY, Way stood outside a secluded bungalow deep in the California desert, not far from Joshua Tree, and began to sing into his iPhone. After a long night's discussion with his wife, Lindsey (an artist and bassist for industrial-punk act Mindless Self Indulgence), he had finally decided on the concept for his new record: It would be set in the desert and draw from a comic-book idea he'd been toying with about post-apocalyptic superheroes. "My brain was kind of exploding," he recalls, "and I was like, 'I see the desert, I see a motorcycle doing doughnuts, I see crash hel-

FROM LEFT: ETHAN MILLER/REUTERS/CORBIS; SHIRLAINE FORREST/WIREIMAGE

SOME PEOPLE DRINK IT ON THE ROCKS,
BUT WE RECOMMEND IN A BAR.



IT'S VODKA.
FROM NEW ZEALAND.

mets, I want guys firing ray guns.” He also had an idea for a “theme song” for the heroes, inspired by a riff My Chem guitarists Frank Iero and Ray Toro had presented to him the previous year: “I thought, ‘It needs to sound like the most violent Saturday-morning-cartoon theme song ever.’”

The song came to him more or less whole, and he sang as much as he could remember into a recorder app in his iPhone, which he finds more “immediate” than firing up GarageBand. Ten months later, Way stands in the pleasantly messy study of his northeast L.A. house, playing the file back through the phone’s tiny speaker. Sure enough, it’s a nearly complete version of the willfully obnoxious “Na Na Na (Na Na Na Na Na Na Na Na Na),” which became *Danger Days*’ first single and defining song. It’s not a song particularly suited to a cappella performance, but, as Way says, “I never have a guitar around when I need one.”

There are a couple of guitars in Way’s study – a Martin acoustic and a sparkly Squier Super-Sonic, cheap but stylish. The room is a fortress of adolescence in what is otherwise a fairly grown-up house: There’s a Porsche 911 Carrera in the garage, surreal paintings on the living-room walls, Way’s 19-month-old daughter Bandit’s toys stacked neatly in plastic cases. But in the study, a Boba Fett helmet sits on the desk, near a tiny R2-D2, while the bookshelves are packed with vintage *Dungeons and Dragons* manuals, comic-book anthologies, rock books (a Lou Reed lyrics compilation, a Nick Cave biography), William Gibson novels and some of the heavier literature Way intends to finish someday, including *Moby Dick*. (The copy of *Girl, Interrupted* is Lindsey’s.) On the floor is the oversize mouse mask Way wears in the hyperkinetic “Na Na Na” video.

Way pauses midsentence when he hears a tiny voice say, “Hiiiiiii.” Bandit is home, and running frantically through the house in a plaid jumper that makes her look like the world’s tiniest grunge revivalist. “Dada,” she says, smiling. Way dashes over to her, looking ecstatic.

His daughter has no idea yet what he does for a living. “She has a sense that I bring a lot of costumes home and a lot of big heads and a lot of big bright toy ray guns,” says Way. “One of my favorite things to do is, in the morning, watch her and Lindsey just color. She’s so young, I still think she just thinks I’m a roommate.”

Way married Lindsey (who performs as Lyn-Z) on the final date of the 2007 Projekt Revolution Tour – after a courtship that lasted all of three weeks. Bandit, a happy surprise, followed in May 2009. “We could see genuine happiness that we hadn’t seen in him for a long time,” says Toro, who, along with all his bandmates, also got married in recent years. “I mean, yeah, it’s fucking crazy. He told us, ‘I’m fucking getting married today,’ and we were like, ‘All right!’”

“We make a part of each other come alive,” says Way, who had broken off an unhappy engagement before he got together with Lindsey. “It’s, like, when you’re in your 20s, you’re just getting used to the dating thing and you’re hiding your comic books, but then you meet that person one day that you can show your comic books to. I think that’s what we do for each other: We make it so we can take the guard down.” He’s sitting in their den, where a giant TV covers one wall, and original *Umbrella Academy* art hangs above Bandit’s playpen.

AS A PUDGY PRETEEN IN working-class Belleville, New Jersey, Gerard Way would awe his little brother (and future My Chem bassist) Mikey – as well as various waitresses – by drawing elaborate sci-fi fantasias on diner place mats. “I don’t know what it is,” says Mikey. “He’s got that thing: He sees it, and he can just do it. It’s pretty wild.” Practically from birth, Way was almost frighteningly overflowing with ideas – for songs, for movies, for comic books, for costumes – as if some vandal muse had permanently kicked the

putting so much of himself into the *Killjoys* comic-book project he was working on, and I thought, ‘That’s the energy you need in the record.’ I just said, ‘Do the *Killjoys*! Make that part of the record!’ To me, the coolest, shiniest, sexiest, darkest, scarriest thing you can be is pop.” Way ultimately cast Morrison as the villain in a series of *Killjoys* music videos, and they’re planning a video game connected to the plot.

But it was Lindsey, during the couple’s trip to the desert, who finally got through to Way. “I had to end up in artistic paralysis to realize I was an artist,” he says. “Lindsey goes, ‘You have all the time in the world to get old.’ It was like saying to myself, ‘Don’t go down without a fight, don’t be the boring thirtysomething rock band that everybody wants you to be.’” So they scrapped the O’Brien record and started over, reusing (though rerecording) just three of the original songs.

Part of Way’s liberation from the past is the fact that he’s walking lighter these days, literally. A strict diet has brought the five-foot-ten singer down to 156 pounds, the lowest weight of his adult life. He had been as heavy as 198 pounds at points over

“I SAID TO MYSELF, ‘DON’T be the boring thirtysomething rock band everybody wants you to be,’” says Way.

cap off his hydrant. At the moment, he’s working on a pitch for a sci-fi TV show: “It’s about the two greatest star-fighter pilots in the galaxy – who mirror the lives of Tupac Shakur and Biggie Smalls,” he says excitedly. “That’s the only thing I’m going to use to sell the show.”

Last year, however, Way’s imagination failed him. He found himself having trouble writing lyrics while working on a set of songs that ultimately left him cold. My Chemical Romance recorded an entire album with producer Brendan O’Brien, and the concept was to have no concept: just straight, Stooges-influenced hard rock. At the time, it seemed like the right idea – a move toward a more adult style.


Way was feeling ill at ease with the style that had defined My Chem – which he started to see less as an aesthetic than as a prison. “With *Revenge*, we set this tone of dark, tortured Gothic imagery, because at the time, I genuinely was angry, tortured, pissed off at God, and the list goes on. I was raised Catholic, so it’s like a checklist. I had every angsty thing you could have. I was in my 20s, but basically reacting to the world as a 16-year-old, which is kind of nuts.”

His friend Grant Morrison – an acclaimed comic-book writer blessed with a similarly uninhibited imagination – was among the first to tell him that the O’Brien album felt like a creative retreat. “He was

the past decade. “It was about feeling freer and moving and being a little more fearless onstage, that’s what this was about, so I just had to get in shape,” he says. “I grew up with severe body issues, and then basically used our wardrobe to shield those body issues for the entirety of the band’s career. It was, ‘Let’s see how much more we can keep covering and putting this body in a prison, because you feel bad about yourself.’”

In the end, Way did write one song about growing up for *Danger Days*: a wistful, Smashing Pumpkins-esque ballad called “The Kids From Yesterday.” It’s My Chem’s prettiest tune. “It was the last song written for the record,” says Way. “When we finished it, I felt so complete, because to me, it’s about accepting, ‘Oh, I did grow up, I just did it the way I wanted to.’ I did it on my terms, and I felt great about it.”

At the moment, Way is wearing a gray sweater over his black jeans, tucked into quilted leather boots that look oddly familiar. On his wrist is a TAG Heuer Monaco watch. “It’s the first nice watch I ever bought,” he says. “I’ve never had a nice watch. I never had a nice car, anything like that. I didn’t buy into that. But I got to the point where I said, ‘You know, I just want a nice watch.’” He looks down at his feet and smiles. “And Han Solo boots. That’s a dream attained, to be able to dress like Han Solo for a living.”

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TURN ON TOMORROW

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THE MYSTERY OF THE DRAGON TATTOO

Six years after his death, Stieg Larsson has become the world's bestselling author – and its most enigmatic. The facts of his life have morphed into myth: Was he murdered? Was he a spy? Was there really a girl with a dragon tattoo?

BY NATHANIEL RICH

THE OFFICES OF “EXPO” MAGAZINE ARE ON THE TOP FLOOR of a seven-story office building in the drab, middle-class neighborhood of Fridhemsplan. It is a gray building on a gray side street in a gray part of Stockholm. That’s why Stieg Larsson chose it. In the decade since he co-founded the anti-racist magazine, he and his staff had been stalked, their printer’s office had been vandalized, and police had uncovered photographs of Larsson and his girlfriend in the possession of a violent neo-Nazi group. He needed a location that could not be easily found. The name *Expo* does not appear anywhere in the lobby. Next to the buzzer for the seventh floor there is a single name: “Larsson.” ❖ On the afternoon of November 9th, 2004, Larsson and a friend entered the lobby. As usual, he was in a rush. He had to finish the next issue of *Expo* and had a deadline looming for a short book about the rise of neo-Nazis in Sweden. And he had recently received news that would change his life:

ILLUSTRATION BY MATT MAHURIN

A trilogy of epic crime novels that he had written in a frantic, two-year burst had just sold to a publisher, and yesterday, he had met with a producer about the possibility of a film deal. The books, which Larsson called the Millennium series, were a hybrid of sexual fantasy and political-crime thriller, featuring an investigative journalist and an affectless, horny, cyberpunk hacker named Lisbeth Salander. Salander, who has a dragon tattoo on her shoulder and dozens of piercings, is lovingly described in the books as "a girl who looks as if she's barely entered puberty and who's less than five feet tall." She has near-magical powers: She survives sadistic sexual violence, a point-blank gunshot to the head and lethal prose. "In a time of great danger," Larsson had written, she remains "cool, calm and collected."

Larsson himself was anything but calm. Today he was even paler than normal, and insomnia had carved dark lines under his eyes. He never exercised, subsisting on a diet of frozen pizzas, fast-food value meals and cigarettes – he smoked as many as 60 a day.

"You don't look well," his friend remarked.

Larsson jabbed the button for the elevator, but it wouldn't come. "I don't have time for this," he said. He headed for the stairs.

By the seventh floor he was sweating heavily and gasping. As he slumped into a chair by the large conference table in *Expo's* office, the magazine's photo editor rushed over to see whether he was OK. Larsson put his hand on his heart. He couldn't speak.

"Stieg, I'm here," said the photo editor. "We're taking care of this. Hang on."

Larsson appeared to hear him. But then he collapsed, his head falling on the table.

By the time the paramedics arrived, the elevator was working. They put an oxygen mask over Larsson's mouth and carried him into an ambulance.

"How old is he?" asked one of the paramedics.

"I'm 50, damn it," Larsson said through the mask.

He wasn't saying that he was too young to die, or too young to have a heart attack. What he meant was: *I don't have time for this.*

NATHANIEL RICH wrote "*The Most Dangerous Man in Cyberspace*" in RS 1112. He lives in New Orleans.

LARSSON DREAMED OF BECOMING a novelist – he told skeptical friends that his novels were his "retirement fund" – but even he couldn't have expected that *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo* and its two sequels would make him the bestselling author in the world. The books have now sold 48 million copies internationally, in 46 countries. In the U.S., the trilogy sold more than 13 million copies this year alone – roughly equal to the sales of recent books by John Grisham, Dan Brown, Stephenie Meyer and Stephen King combined. Larsson has outsold Paddington Bear, Anne Frank and Roget's Thesaurus.

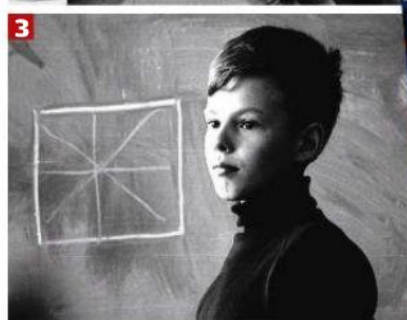
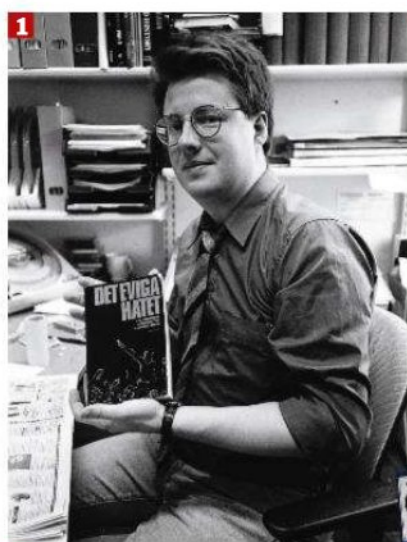
novels. So far, at least five candidates have been named, one of them a man.

Larsson's estate has meanwhile become embroiled in a prolonged public saga that has pitted his girlfriend of 32 years, Eva Gabrielsson, against Larsson's family. Because Larsson never signed a will, and never married Gabrielsson, his posthumous fortune has been inherited by his brother and father. The Larssons offered Gabrielsson \$2.6 million; she refused it. It's not exactly clear what she wants. "I think Eva wants to be a victim," says Joakim, Stieg's brother. "We feel sorry for that. It's sad, you know." Erland, Stieg's father, adds: "It's a way to get people to pity her and love her."

The debate over the money has captivated the Swedish press, with both sides coming off badly. The family has spent almost none of Larsson's money. Joakim draws a salary of about \$3,500 a month, and the only outward indication Erland gives of wealth are the brown suede gloves he wears when driving his Kia, but they have been demonized for excluding Gabrielsson. "In Sweden, we are seen as greedy, brutal relatives," says Erland. "We have a very bad reputation." Gabriels-son, for her part, has stopped giving interviews. "I am done with refuting things about Stieg, about me and what happened after he died," she e-mails me. "Therefore, I have written a book about it, and I hope that will be the end of all lies and speculations." The book comes out in France, one of Larsson's biggest markets, in January.

Larsson's hometown of Umeå is an ugly university city on the Gulf of Bothnia, 400 miles north of Stockholm. In the Sixties and Seventies, city planners decided to replace Umeå's old buildings with the cheap concrete architecture popular at the time; the result is that the city, despite being situated near a picturesque stretch of Baltic coastline, bears a disconcerting resemblance to Danbury, Connecticut. Stieg Larsson spent much of his childhood here, and his brother and father receive guests in an office park in the middle of town, where they share a small suite blandly outfitted with functional, minimalistic furniture. It's unclear what work is done here besides interviews.

Like all modern mythologies, the world of Stieg Larsson has also become an industry. His family, his editors and his former co-workers now spend much of their time speaking with the scores of journalists who come to Sweden hoping to solve



The Crusader

Before he became a novelist, Larsson worked as a journalist for more than two decades.

(1) On staff at the news agency TT in Stockholm, 1994. (2) He co-founded the anti-racist magazine *Expo* in 1995. (3) As a schoolboy in the 1960s.



In the process, Larsson himself has entered into the realm of mythology, the tales about him increasing in extravagance in direct correlation to his sales. There are stories about his alleged interrogation at the hands of military-intelligence agents and about his Elvis-like aversion to medical professionals (he consulted an African witch doctor, claims one friend). There are charges that he didn't write the books at all, that he was poisoned by Nazis, that he didn't actually die of a heart attack but faked his own death and is now in hiding. There are rumors about a fourth, unpublished Millennium book (Larsson's girlfriend says it exists but that it would be like "trying to finish a Picasso" and says she will never allow it to be published). And there are wild speculations about the purported existence of a real-life Lisbeth Salander, a model for the superhero of the

the various mysteries surrounding the author and his books. "I'm quite exhausted," says Larsson's editor, Eva Gedin, who has patiently given interviews to hundreds of journalists. "It can't go on like this. It's been interesting, but it has taken a lot of my time."

Anna-Lena Lodenius, who co-wrote a book on the extreme right with Larsson, says, "I often think that after I die, all I'll be remembered for is that I knew Stieg Larsson."

For Kurdo Baksi, a former publisher of *Expo* whom Larsson called his "kid brother," talking about his friend has become a full-time job. He's the first person to publish a memoir about Larsson (*Stieg Larsson: Our Days in Stockholm*), and he sits for an average of 20 interviews a week, sometimes traveling abroad for press conferences, film screenings and seminars. "I think he would do the same thing for me if he were alive," says Baksi. "I mean, if I had died, published three books, and was very, very famous."

Like those who preceded me, I meet with all of the people who were closest to Larsson. I listen dutifully to their stories, charting the fluctuations between well-

hope of finding jobs. They left their son behind with Vivianne's parents.

Larsson grew up in Bjursele, a village of only 60 people. Larsson writes in *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo* that "Bjursele was like a poster for the Västerbotten country village. It consisted of about 20 houses set relatively close together in a semicircle at one end of a lake. . . . At the height of summer, it was as pretty as a postcard."

As a boy, Stieg lived in his grandparents' cottage in the woods. At the time, an old Swedish law was still in effect that barred children from attending school until they were seven. Written a century earlier, the law was intended to protect little boys and girls from being devoured by wolves while walking through the forest on the way to school. So Stieg grew up surrounded by forest, with no school, no television – only books. He loved detective stories, especially Astrid Lindgren's series about the boy detective Kalle Blomkvist, and Sivar Ahlud's *Tvillingdetektivena*, "twin detectives" who were a Swedish equivalent to the Hardy Boys. His grandfather Severin was also a source of constant fascination: He had opposed the Nazis during World War II and was a life-

bore a remarkable resemblance to Umeå. "I could recognize every stone, every tree, the lake," Erland says now, still bewildered by his son's abilities. Soon after, his parents surprised Stieg with a gift: his first typewriter.

In his teens, Larsson founded two science-fiction fanzines, contributing stories, articles and illustrations. As a form of payment, readers could send in stories or write a letter to the editor. The barrier between science fiction and politics has always been permeable, but this was the Seventies, and the Swedish youth movement had reached a state of frenzied urgency. The magazine regularly received letters from young leftists. There was one exception: a science-fiction fan named Lars-Göran Hedengård, who passionately defended Nixon and supported the Vietnam War.

Larsson could not let these comments stand unchallenged. The magazine soon became dominated by his responses to Hedengård's letters. Hedengård, it became clear, was active in the pro-fascist movement. Larsson was aware of hate groups in Sweden, but he was appalled that their membership was being re-

"STIEG COULDN'T HELP HIMSELF," HIS PUBLISHER RECALLS. "THE MOMENT HE SAT DOWN AT A COMPUTER, HE TOOK SIDES."

rehearsed boilerplate and outrageous fabrication. But it is only when I meet Therese Larsson, Stieg's 26-year-old niece, that things begin to make sense. Her uncle's death was devastating to her, and outside of a couple of local Swedish newspapers, she has avoided speaking to the press. But she has been increasingly disturbed by the mythological being that Stieg has become. "What I read in the paper – that's not him," she says in her father's office. "That's not Stieg."

As she speaks, the thick curtains of Larsson Industries part, and a man emerges. His story, as it turns out, is far stranger, and sadder, than myth.

LARSSON WAS NOT AN ONLY child, but for much of his childhood, he lived like one. His parents met as teenagers at an outdoor dance in the summer of 1953 in Skellefteå, a small city 500 miles north of Stockholm. Erland was on leave from the military. Vivianne was the daughter of a blue-collar worker. The following year, Karl Stig-Erland Larsson was born in Skelleftehamn, population 3,000. When Stieg was still an infant, Vivianne and Erland moved to Stockholm in the

long communist; Stieg would later publish political tracts in Trotskyite publications under the pen name "Severin."

Stieg soon began making up his own stories. When his parents and his younger brother, Joakim, visited at Christmas, the two children would play in the woods, and at night, Stieg would narrate elaborate tales about a boy detective named Joakim Larsson, with titles like "The Mystery of the Killer in the Next House." "I just loved to listen to him," says Joakim. "If the stories were true or false, it didn't matter."

When Stieg was eight, Severin died, and he moved with his grandmother to Umeå, where the rest of the family had settled. His parents both found work in a dress shop, and his mother won a seat on the city council; his father later worked as an illustrator for the local newspaper. In their tiny one-bedroom apartment, Stieg's grandmother took the sofa, while Stieg and Joakim had a bunk bed. Their parents slept in the hall, on the floor. Stieg, disturbed by this upheaval and Severin's death, retreated into his fantasies. One day, he handed his father his first short story. It was about two boy detectives, Jack and John, who solve mysteries in America – in a distant town that

freshed with people of his own generation. He determined to expose everything he could learn about these people, many of whom operated in secrecy. He would become a detective.

Rejected by the Stockholm School of Journalism and unable to get a job as a reporter, Larsson opted for the time-honored tactic of aspiring journalists: If a newspaper wouldn't send him to cover a story, he'd find the story himself. He headed to Africa, looking for adventure – riding buses through Algeria, Morocco and Kenya. On a trip to Ethiopia, he met members of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front, a Marxist separatist group, and later told friends he trained a company of female soldiers to use grenade launchers – a story he embellished over the years. His biggest scare – besides contracting malaria and developing a kidney problem – occurred in Addis Ababa. A female backpacker from New Zealand, whom Larsson had met on a bus, told military-intelligence officers at the British Embassy that Larsson knew what kind of weapons the Ethiopian rebels had. He was picked up but refused to answer any questions. Though he later described the walk back from the em-



The Inspiration

(1) Stieg's niece, Therese, was a real-life basis for Lisbeth Salander, the hero of the Millennium trilogy. (2) The Swedish-film version of the character. Stieg told his brother that Salander was "like Therese." (3) Today he is such a Swedish icon, he has his own stamp.



bassy through war-torn Addis Ababa as a harrowing, life-threatening affair, he returned to his hotel without further incident.

Throughout his African travels, he wrote articles from the front, but editors in Sweden weren't interested. He came back home penniless and malarial, and was forced to take a job loading packages at the Stockholm post office. A sympathetic friend finally took pity on him and wrangled Larsson a typist position at Tidningarnas Telegrambyrå, the Swedish equivalent of the Associated Press. He took to calling himself a reporter, but friends knew he was bluffing. "If you consider all the years Stieg worked at TT," Kurdo Baksi writes in his memoir, "he wrote comparatively few articles of any length." Over the next 20 years, Larsson is credited with writing only 25 pieces, many of them reviews of crime novels. Five were interviews with the editorial board he later set up at *Expo* – interviews, in essence, with himself.

Larsson felt like he had something to prove and was irritated that his one-man crusade against bigotry was being largely ignored – but he was unrelenting. "Stieg simply couldn't help himself," says Baksi. "The moment he sat down at a computer, he took sides."

AS LARSSON STRUGGLED TO establish himself as a journalist, his obsession with the extreme right grew increasingly rabid. He collected every journal, pamphlet and piece of correspondence from extremists he could find. The idea for an archive came to him after reading Frederick Forsyth's thriller *The Odessa File* – an investigative journalist uncovers an archive of information about a secret international Nazi organization, which he attempts to infiltrate as an undercover agent. Larsson became a correspondent for the British anti-racism journal *Searchlight*. Then, in 1991, he had his first real break: *Extremhögern* ("The Extreme Right"), an exhaustive history he co-wrote tracing the rise of far-right groups, surpassed all sales expectations. Over 10 years, it sold some 6,000 copies.

But Larsson was still frustrated. He was pushing 40, and his journalism career was faltering. He had moved on from his typist duties at TT – he now designed the graphics that ran alongside articles – but editors still weren't giving him the writing assignments he craved. It wasn't because of any lack of intensity, however. When he would go out for drinks after work, he had little patience for small talk, trying to steer the conversation to issues of sub-

stance. If someone discussed a subject he didn't know about – flowers commonly found in Uppsala, say, or Amazon warriors – he would go home that night and research it online, then show up the next morning at his colleague's desk, reciting facts that demonstrated his knowledge. Did they know that the Latin name for the white, heather-like flower was *Leptospermum rubinette*? Or that the Greeks coined the term "Amazon"?

"He was an autodidact and had an extreme sense of knowledge about all kinds of different subjects," says Robert Aschberg, a television host and columnist who serves as *Expo*'s publisher. "Information was like a drug for him: He had to know everything."

Yet Larsson couldn't bring himself to leave TT. He took pride in working for the news agency – and he needed the salary. He rarely used banks, keeping all of his money in his wallet and paying bills with cash at the post office. His father urged him to start thinking of himself: "Write something commercial," Erland would tell him in his loud, stentorian voice. Remembering his son's passion for Astrid Lindgren, he suggested that Stieg try his hand at children's literature.

In a way, Larsson already had. For some time, he had worked on his own version of Sivar Ahlrud's *Tvillingdetektiverna* books, in which the boy detectives were now adults and had to solve serious crimes. But it didn't work, and he threw it away. The only way forward, he concluded, was to start his own publication, as he had done in Umeå with his fanzines. There was no question about what its subject would be. By the early Nineties, neo-Nazi groups were holding protests in the street, in full regalia, and Stockholm's immigrant population was being terrorized by a serial killer known as the Laser Man. The subject of Larsson's arcane obsession – a splintered right-wing extremist movement in a country that had been ruled for most of the century by a leftist government – had suddenly become the major story of his time.

The debut issue of *Expo* appeared in August 1995, with the stated goal of studying and surveying "anti-democratic, right-wing extremist and racist tendencies in Swedish society." The first issues didn't attract much attention. But the magazine was noticed by the only constituency that mattered: Nazis. The printer's office was vandalized, and newsstands carrying the magazine had their windows smashed and their walls spray-painted with the message: DON'T PRINT *EXPO*!

It was the best thing that could have happened to a fledgling investigative magazine. The violence attracted major attention in the press – it became known as "the *Expo* affair" – and Sweden's two large-

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est evening newspapers jointly published a special edition of *Expo*. The magazine never had more than 1,000 subscribers in Larsson's lifetime and always lost money, but its voice was heard.

Even before the launch of *Expo*, Larsson worried about the threats against him. He had installed a vaultlike fireproof door in his home and changed his routine daily – going to and from work at odd hours and taking different routes home. His friends didn't know what to make of his increasing vigilance. Were the threats against him legitimate? Or was it part of his self-dramatizing act as an investigative journalist?

Then something happened that justified Larsson's most paranoid theories. One afternoon the phone rang at his desk at TT. The caller's voice was oddly cheerful.

"Someone will kill you today," he said. Then the line went dead.

Larsson went to the window. On a bench across the street sat a man with a large bag. He was watching the building's entrance, as if he was waiting for someone.

Larsson knew the police wouldn't believe his story and that they would have no

cheap coffee and suffered from insomnia. He begged friends for funding, conducted research and trained his young staff, some of whom he had recruited as teenagers. The kids adored him; he handed out his e-mail address freely, and responded to anyone who wrote to him, often at startling length. "He was the great old man who knew everything," says Mikael Ekman, who went to work at *Expo* when he was 19.

The staff loved listening to Larsson's stories. A few times, he talked about a girl who had been gang-raped by teenagers in the woods outside of Umeå when he was a kid. He sometimes claimed that the teenagers were his friends, that he was there, standing by while the crime unfolded, and that his sense of guilt had inspired him to devote his life to defending women against violence. Kurdo Baksi argues that this girl was the main inspiration for Lisbeth Salander; the original Swedish title of *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo* was *Män som hatar kvinnor* – "Men Who Hate Women." But Larsson later told a colleague at *Expo* that he had heard the story secondhand. For all his friends knew, he'd made the whole thing up.

party that he co-wrote with Ekman, the publisher begged Ekman to walk Larsson to the bank.

Larsson was tired of worrying about *Expo's* future, tired of relying on Gabriels-son, an architect, to organize their finances, tired of carrying his life's savings in the pocket of his jeans. "I'm fed up with having to go around with my hat out, begging for money for *Expo*," he complained to a friend. "Nobody cares, nobody gives us any money. I need a one-time solution."

His father was right: He needed to write something commercial.

In 2002, Larsson and Gabriels-son took a vacation to the Stockholm archipelago. He put aside his work for *Expo* and decided to try again at a novel. There was a growing international market for Scandinavian crime fiction, and no one knew more about the genre than he did. In place of the traditional detective, he would have an investigative journalist. This character would be the grown-up version of a popular children's detective – only instead of taking *Twillingdetektiverna* as his model, he would use Astrid Lindgren's know-it-all boy detective, Kalle Blomkvist. He would be an idealized version of Larsson

"SOMEONE WILL KILL YOU TODAY," THE CHEERFUL VOICE TOLD LARSSON OVER THE PHONE. THEN THE LINE WENT DEAD.

grounds to pick up a man sitting peacefully on a bench. Larsson could leave by the back door, but the man might return the next day, and the one after that.

He called the police.

"There will be a bank robbery this afternoon," Larsson told them. "The robber is currently sitting on a bench in front of Kungsholmstorg 5."

"Who is this? Where are you calling from?" Larsson hung up.

Minutes later, a police car pulled up in front of the office. The man was apprehended, his bag was checked. It contained several guns. Larsson took the back door out and ran home.

EXPO WAS BAD FOR HIS health. The office was a haze of smoke, the tables littered with cigarette stubs floating in half-full coffee mugs and mayonnaise-smearing sandwich wrappers from fast-food joints. (Larsson's dinner of choice was a McFeast & Co., the Swedish equivalent of a Quarter Pounder value meal – only instead of a Coke he ordered whole milk.) He was in the office every night after leaving TT, and all weekend. He drank obscene quantities of

These embellishments hardly mattered to his admiring staffers. Ekman was drawn to *Expo* after reading Larsson's book on the extreme right when he was just 15. When he noticed that his high school dance had been overrun by skinheads, he called the *Expo* offices to speak with Larsson, who responded immediately. Before long, Larsson was encouraging the teenager to go undercover as a mole in his local Nazi youth organization. Ekman joined the National Socialist Front, attending meetings and reporting his findings. Daniel Poohl, who became editor of *Expo* after Larsson's death, also began as a teen mole, infiltrating a Nazi youth journal. He debriefed Larsson, who taught him strategies to maintain his cover. Larsson hadn't just created a magazine. He had created an agency for boy detectives.

The biggest pressure Larsson felt – more than the fear of being assaulted by right-wing zealots or the challenge of publishing a magazine with a staff dominated by writers and editors in their 20s – was money. Although he was perpetually broke, he gave little thought to his own personal finances. He neglected for so long to cash the \$6,000 advance he received for a book about a racist Swedish political

– a national celebrity who tells his par-amours things like "I'm not going to apologize for the way I've led my life." ("Going to bed with him," Larsson writes, "was not threatening or complicated, but might be erotically enjoyable.")

Blomkvist would be a hard-charging reporter at *Millennium*, a fantasy version of *Expo*: "The magazine began as a real outsider . . . its circulation has grown and today is 21,000 copies monthly." But Blomkvist would be secondary. The novel's main figure would be the adult incarnation of a different Lindgren character: Pippi Longstocking.

In Lindgren's stories, Pippi is a jester and prankster – a nine-year-old girl with superhuman strength who lives on her own. Larsson, well aware that Lindgren was the bestselling author in the history of Swedish literature, later made a point of emphasizing the Pippi Longstocking connection. "What would she be like as an adult?" he wondered in the only interview he gave about his novels before his death. "What would she be called? A sociopath? Somebody suffering from attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder? I made her like Lisbeth Salander, 25 years old, with a ginormous [Cont. on 122]

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Reviews



Jackson
in 2002

Jackson's Patchwork Jams

'Michael' is a grab bag with flashes of genius

Michael Jackson ★★★ Michael Sony



This is not a Michael Jackson album. Jackson was one of pop's biggest fussbudgets: Even when his songs were half-baked, the production was pristine. He would not have released anything like this compilation, a grab bag of outtakes and outlines assembled by Jackson's label. And yet, it's a testament to the man's charisma that *Michael* can be compelling. Jackson gets songwriting credit on eight of 10 tracks, and they are recognizably Michael Jackson songs. "Behind the Mask" is a fiercely funky cousin to "Wanna Be Startin' Somethin'"; the Lenny Kravitz-produced "(I Can't Make It) Another Day" is a "Dirty Diana"-esque dance-rock song that also features Kravitz on guitar. There are thrilling glimpses into MJ's creative process – check the snippet of him singing and beatboxing his idea for "(I Like) The Way You Love Me" – but *Michael*'s most amazing moment is the *Thriller*-era ballad "Much Too Soon." The song is full of guitars and strings, but all you really hear is that voice – hovering between child and adult, between male and female, between mournful and ecstatic.

Key Tracks:
"Behind the Mask," "Much Too Soon"

JODY ROSEN

Ryan Adams and the Cardinals

★★★★½

III/IV Pax Am

Leftovers set swerves all over – sometimes wonderfully



Around 2006, prolific, hard-drugging singer-songwriter Ryan Adams cleaned up and began spitting out even more music. *III/IV* is 21 songs from 2007's *Easy Tiger* sessions, supplanting that album's wired folk rock with a blend of punk head rush, New Wave twitch, metal crunch and hippie noodling. "The Crystal Skull" is Morrissey with a girl-friend; "Ultraviolet Light" posits Ian Curtis fronting the Byrds. Does it cohere? Please. Just tighten your scarf and savor the storm.

WILL HERMES

Key Tracks: "Numbers," "Users," "Dear Candy," "Kill the Lights"

The Smashing Pumpkins ★★★★★½

Teargarden by Kaleidyscope Vol. II: The Solstice

Bare Martha's Music/
Rocket Science Ventures

Billy Corgan's crew gets back to its psych-rock roots



For the 11-EP series *Teargarden by Kaleidyscope*, Billy Corgan says he's returning to the Smashing Pumpkins' "original psychedelic roots." The second EP (*Vol. I* came out in May) is awesomely heavy, atmospheric and fueled by a stoner-friendly concept: The lyrics were inspired by Tarot cards. "Are you with us or against us tonight?" Corgan croons on "The Fellowship." We're with you, man. Now pass the bong.

MELISSA MAERZ

Key Tracks: "Freak," "The Fellowship"

Duran Duran

★★★★½

All You Need Is Now

iTunes exclusive

With Mark Ronson, Duran again get awesomely vapid



Duran's Mark Ronson-produced 13th disc is a return to roots for a band that's all implants – which is part of the album's charm. "Being Followed" and the tawdry "Runway Runaway" are every bit the chic Riviera rock of Duran's 1980s classics, and the years have added posh-boy crankiness to Simon Le Bon's lyrics: "I should've known when I bought into the dream," he moans like the Miss Havisham of New Romantic overkill. It's the kind of empty thought that makes this record a hoot.

JON DOLAN

Key Tracks: "Runway Runaway," "Being Followed"

Black Dub ★★★★★½

Black Dub *Jive*

U2 and Dylan producer makes an astral roots-rock album



As a producer, Daniel Lanois sees roots music as a mess of fragmented pasts, all dusty, atmospheric hum. With *Black Dub*, he and singer Trixie Whitley make rock in homage to dub titan Lee "Scratch" Perry. Reggae and funk beats waylay Lanois' New Age-y drift, and the best bits hang between gospel and space rock – like "Canaan" or "Ring the Alarm," over six minutes of astral Hendrix.

J.D.

Key Tracks: "Canaan," "Ring the Alarm," "Slow Baby"



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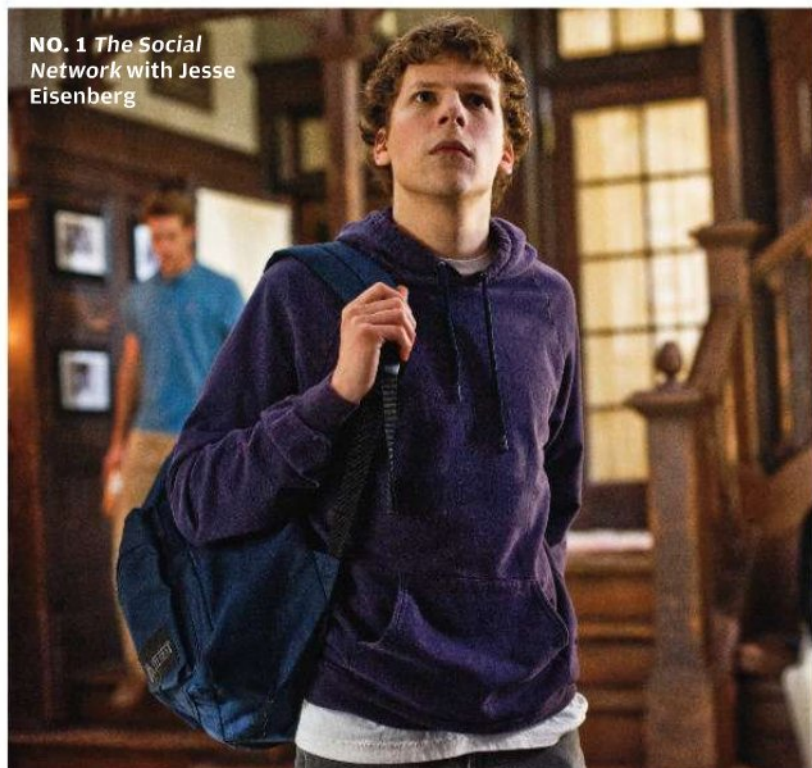
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NO. 1 *The Social Network* with Jesse Eisenberg



NO. 2 *Inception* with Leonardo DiCaprio



NO. 3 *The King's Speech* with Colin Firth



MOVIES OF THE YEAR

By Peter Travers

Let us praise movies that didn't suck in 2010. Begone, sequels to *Twilight* and *Sex and the City*. Begone, chick flicks that bossed us around (what if I don't want to eat, pray, love?). Begone, epics Hollywood made in 3D because they couldn't make them good. This space is for 10 films that earned a place in the year's time capsule.

1 *The Social Network*

This is the movie that told us who we were this year, this decade: willing slaves to technology as a substitute for direct communication. Forget the letters of protest. You're probably text-messaging them on your BlackBerry. Or voicing them on iChat. Of course, the invention of Facebook by Mark Zuckerberg, played to potent perfection by Jesse Eisenberg, is just a part of the social-networking boom. What director David Fincher and screenwriter Aaron Sorkin are doing in this movie that IMHO surpasses all other movies this year is using Facebook to hold up a mirror to the way we live now. And doing it with wit, imagination, honesty and satire so cutting it can open wounds. Don't be afraid of friending *The Social Network*. It might just open your eyes beyond your computer screen.

2 *Inception*

Is there a filmmaker less tamed by convention than Christopher Nolan? Don't think so. And *Inception*, starring Leonardo DiCaprio as a professional invader of dreams, is a visionary milestone that gets better and digs deeper each time you see it.

3 *The King's Speech*

In Tom Hooper's vibrant human drama, the king has a stammer. He can't give a speech to save his crown, even when he needs to rally his subjects against the Nazis. As George VI, Colin Firth delivers the performance of the year, equaled only by Geoffrey Rush as his Aussie teacher.

4 True Grit

The Coen brothers enter the twisted mind of novelist Charles Portis to make a near-flawless Western about a teen girl (Hailee Steinfeld) and a one-eyed fat man (Jeff Bridges) who may be her salvation.

5 The Kids Are All Right

A sperm donor (Mark Ruffalo) comes between a doctor (Annette Bening) and a landscaper (Julianne Moore) in Lisa Cholodenko's raw, funny and humane family drama. Bening is Oscar-worthy.

6 127 Hours

James Franco and director Danny Boyle carve artful adventure out of this true tale of a climber who spends six days with his arm trapped and crushed under a rock.

7 Black Swan

Darren Aronofsky directs a fever dream of a ballet thriller with a tour de force from Natalie Portman as a besieged dancer whose body and mind are coming apart.

8 The Fighter

The family that fights together tries like hell to stay together in the true story of two boxing brothers (soulful Mark Wahlberg and electrifying Christian Bale). Gifted director David O. Russell refs in high style.

9 Winter's Bone

Director Debra Granik rubs your emotions raw about family secrets that fester in the Ozarks. Jennifer Lawrence, as a girl searching for her father, and John Hawkes, as her uncle, give indelible performances.

10 Toy Story 3

The pure pleasure of Pixar animated magic is also 2010's biggest box-office hit.

Tie for 11th

For psychodrama, Martin Scorsese's **Shutter Island**. For crime, Ben Affleck's **The Town**. For political thriller, Roman Polanski's **The Ghost Writer**. For wit and wisdom, Mike Leigh's **Another Year**. For raw intimacy, Derek Cianfrance's **Blue Valentine**. For foreign film, Juan José Campanella's **The Secret in Their Eyes**. For disturbing laughs, the Duplass bros' **Cyrus**. For laughs that make no excuses, Ricki Stern and Annie Sundberg's **Joan Rivers: A Piece of Work**. For muckraking doc, Davis Guggenheim's **Waiting for Superman**. For personal doc, Ariel Schulman and Henry Joost's **Catfish**.



TRUE GRIT
Jeff Bridges and
Hailee Steinfeld

OSCAR HUNT

True Grit ★★★½
Jeff Bridges, Hailee Steinfeld
Directed by Joel and Ethan Coen

Leave it to the Coen brothers, Joel and Ethan, to do right smart by *True Grit*, the 1968 Charles Portis novel that a year later became the Western that won John Wayne his only Oscar. Audiences remember Wayne as Rooster Cogburn, the fat, one-eyed drunk of a U.S. marshal. But that's about all that sticks. By staying true to Portis – the richness of his language runs through the film like a vein of comic gold – the Coens have crafted a vastly entertaining Wild West show that is memorable in every particular. Don't mind the PG-13 rating. Family fare hasn't stopped the Coens from being playfully subversive or letting darkness encroach on the characters. With due respect to Jeff Bridges, who is killer good at playing the hell out of double-tough Rooster and his rusted nobility, the Coens wisely put their focus where Portis put it: on Mattie Ross (Hailee Steinfeld), the 14-year-old dynamo from Arkansas who hires Rooster to bring in Tom Chaney (a sly, wicked Josh Brolin), the varmint who gunned down her daddy. I don't know where the Coens found Steinfeld, 13, but her star-is-born performance is worth shouting about. Steinfeld excels at Mattie's Southern idioms, backed with Presbyterian steel. She's Huck Finn as a teen diva. Just watch her outmaneuver a horse trader or slap around Matt Damon's La Boeuf (pronounced "la beef"), the vain Texas ranger who deems her too unattractive and too young to rouse his interest. You'll go nuts over Damon. He puts everything into the role and rides

it to glory. La Boeuf hates it that Mattie insists on riding with him and Rooster into Oklahoma Indian territory, where Chaney is in cahoots with Lucky Ned Pepper (a terrific Barry Pepper). Cinematographer Roger Deakins outdoes himself with images of rugged beauty. Rooster's two-gun, reins-in-his-teeth showdown ("Fill your hand, you son of a bitch") lets the Dude do the Dude proud.



TRON:
LEGACY
Garrett
Hedlund
inside
computer
world

What makes *True Grit* a new classic for the Coens is the way the brothers absorb the unfairly unsung Portis into their DNA, like they did with Cormac McCarthy in *No Country for Old Men*. *True Grit* is packed with action and laughs, plus a touching coda with an older Mattie, but it's the dialogue that really sings. Great filmmaking. Great acting. Great movie. Saddle up.

Tron: Legacy ★★★
Jeff Bridges, Garrett Hedlund
Directed by Joseph Kosinski

The special effects are award-caliber in this sequel to the 1982 *Tron*, the pioneering cult film in computer technology. More good news is that Jeff Bridges



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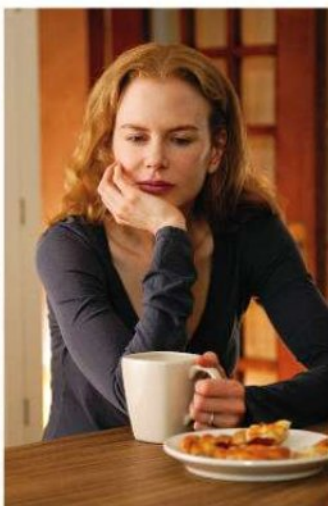
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ACTING OUT Clockwise from top: Ryan Gosling and Michelle Williams are torn apart in *Blue Valentine*; Nicole Kidman suffers in *Rabbit Hole*; Reese Witherspoon and Paul Rudd can't laugh off love in *How Do You Know*; Javier Bardem is a father in trouble in *Biutiful*.

is back playing Flynn and his ageless computer avatar, Clu. "The cycles haven't been kind to you," Clu cracks wise to his maker. Bridges has a fine time playing with himself, so to speak. Add Garrett Hedlund as Flynn's son Sam, the rebel who zaps himself into the server to find his lost dad, and director Joseph Kosinski has a recipe for adventure that should delight gamers. Non-techies are on their own.

Blue Valentine ★★★½

Ryan Gosling, Michelle Williams

Directed by Derek Cianfrance

Whether or not the dumb NC-17 rating sticks to this wrenching story of a marriage that rides a roller coaster for six tumultuous years, *Blue Valentine* is not to be missed. Ryan Gosling and Michelle Williams give two of the most explosive and emotionally naked performances you will see anywhere. Just know you're in for a workout. Derek Cianfrance (*Brother Tied*) directs in a storm of feeling, as if the movie was ripped from his insides. Maybe it was. It took the Brooklyn-based filmmaker a dozen years to get his film made. Still, every scene registers poignantly, from the couple's first wistful dance on the street to a tryst at a raunchy motel that backfires badly. Cianfrance lets us watch what happens to passion over time. *Blue Valentine* hits hard – no mercy.

How Do You Know ★★★

★★★★

Paul Rudd, Reese Witherspoon

Directed by James L. Brooks

No one looks at the clash between how we love and how we earn a living with the knowing comic flair of James L. Brooks. *How Do You Know* takes him out of the halls of TV power (*Broadcast News*) and into the crashing lives of two careerists in a down economy. Lisa (Reese Witherspoon) is a pro softball player cut from her team for getting slower and older at 31. George (Paul Rudd, a first-class actor savoring material to match) is a suit being set up for stock fraud. And the culprit may be his father (Jack Nicholson, working his witty eyebrows for big laughs). Lisa considers moving in with Matty (Owen Wilson), a major-league pitcher whose idea of fidelity doesn't include anonymous sex. "That's the last yard," he says in a charming whine that's pure Wilson. Lisa hooks up with George on a disastrous blind date. The two shouldn't click, but they do, kind of, as they try to figure out how you know when you're in love. Witherspoon and Rudd spar beautifully, relishing Brooks' long takes and deliciously funny dialogue. The movie doesn't pander to attention-deficient audiences, which could be a trouble spot. Brooks, bless him, takes his sweet time.

Rabbit Hole ★★★½

Nicole Kidman, Aaron Eckhart

Directed by John Cameron Mitchell

Nicole Kidman is just astonishing in *Rabbit Hole* – subtle, fierce, brutally funny, tender when you least expect it, and battered by the feelings that hit her when she forgets to duck. Kidman plays Becca, a mother coping with the impossible fact that six months ago a car struck and killed her four-year-old son as he ran into the street. You can't deal with that. But Becca must. So must her husband, Howie (a superb Aaron Eckhart). They try the usual routes, from God to grief counseling, but they need to carve their own path without destroying their marriage. Out of unspeakable sadness, David Lindsay-Abaire, brilliantly adapting his play for the screen, creates a movie that uses humor as a kind of healing. It's a rough road, and director John Cameron Mitchell (*Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, *Shortbus*) doesn't smooth the ride with glib good intentions. This haunting and hypnotic movie blinks back tears in favor of taking on the world, not running from it. Becca hilariously skewers the hypocrisy she finds in grief therapy and harangues her mother (Dianne Wiest), who lost a grown son, for comparing her sorrow to Becca's. Mitchell directs with remarkable skill and compassion without ever going soft on the characters. Kidman, doing her best work in years, just comes at you. Her final scene with the splendid Wiest, who builds her character with uncommon feeling, is devastating. So is the movie. It takes a piece out of you.

Biutiful ★★★

Javier Bardem

Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu

It would be impossible to list the Oscar-worthy performances of 2010 without highlighting Javier Bardem in *Biutiful*. Mexican director Alejandro González Iñárritu (*Babel*, *21 Grams*, *Amores Perros*) describes Uxbal, the character Bardem embodies in flesh and spirit, as "devoted father, tormented lover, mystified son, underground businessman, ghost seeker, spiritual sensitive, consumer-goods pirate, guilty conscience and urban survivor." All of this and more can be seen on Bardem's indelibly expressive face. Uxbal wanders the mean streets of Barcelona trying to put his life in order, evading the law while caring for his two kids, Ana (Hanaa Bouchaib) and Mateo (Guillermo Estrella), since their bipolar mother (an amazing job from Maricel Álvarez) is incapable. *Biutiful* (the title is derived from Ana's misspelling) digs out beauty in the rubble. Shot hand-held with a poet's eye by Rodrigo Prieto, the film is relentless but as riveting as the world a remarkable actor lets us see through Uxbal's eyes. Bravo, Bardem.



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Evan Williams is the best kept secret in Bourbon whiskey. Sometimes being a best kept secret can mean getting an inside word on other little known gems. Black Stone Cherry, a powerful group of musicians from Edmonton, Kentucky, is a best kept secret that Evan Williams is proud to share. We caught up with the group to learn more about where they're from and what their life on the road is like. They told us a little about the new album they're recording and even shared their favorite way to enjoy Evan Williams Bourbon.

You're from a small town in Kentucky. Tell us a little bit about where you grew up. Yeah, we're from a small town called Edmonton which is in South Central Kentucky. I think the population sign still reads less than 2,000 people. It's a great small town where everybody knows each other. The whole band still lives in Edmonton and will always call it home. We've kept that small-town mentality through everything we've done.

What's your life on the road like? Honestly, it's the greatest job in the world because we get to do what we

love and hang out with each other all day; we've been best friends for so long. We go in and play a gig and then after the show's done, we go out and sign autographs, talk to fans, and hang out for as long as the venue will allow us to. After that, we'll head back to the bus and chill.

You guys are working on a new record now, right? Yeah, we're in Nashville today writing a song with a friend of ours and it's going great. We're actually cutting the song right now. We're in a closet in the studio! Right now, we're recording the demos for

the album and we'll start recording the full album in November.

So is Bourbon the drink of choice there in Kentucky? Oh, yeah, for sure. Much like with horse racing and the Kentucky Derby, we take a lot of pride in our Bourbon. We're honored to be associated with Evan Williams, especially because they are an independent, family-owned company and we love that independent spirit. We always give big props to our small town and the state, so to be affiliated with them is amazing.

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What's your favorite way to drink Evan Williams? Bourbon and Coke. To be honest, some of us won't drink Coke unless there's Bourbon in it.

What are some things people don't know about the band? Do you have any well-kept secrets? We're pretty open people; we don't really have many secrets that our fans don't know about. We're just normal dudes. Working on our third album now, we're still the same old dudes we were when we were just starting out.

[Cont. from 97] We're not the first to say "Imagine No Countries" or "Give Peace a Chance," but we're carrying that torch, like the Olympic torch, passing it hand to hand, to each other, to each country, to each generation...and that's our job. Not to live according to somebody else's idea of how we should live – rich, poor, happy, not happy, smiling, not smiling, wearing the right jeans, not wearing the right jeans.

I'm not claiming divinity. I've never claimed purity of soul. I've never claimed to have the answers to life. I only put out songs and answer questions as honestly as I can, but only as honestly as I can – no more, no less. I cannot live up to other people's expectations of me because they're illusionary. I cannot be a punk in Hamburg and Liverpool, because I'm older now. I see the world through different eyes now. But I still believe in peace, love and understanding. As Elvis Costello said, What's so fucking funny about peace, love and understanding? It's fashionable to be a go-getter and slash thy neighbor with a cross, but we're not one to follow the fashion.

It's like your song "The Word...."

Yes, the word was "love."

"Why in the world are we here?/Surely not to live in pain and fear" – that's from "Instant Karma." And that's an idea in all of your and Yoko's work...as when she sings in her new song "Beautiful Boys": "Please never be afraid to cry.... Don't ever be afraid to fly.... Don't be afraid to be afraid." I found that beautiful.

That is beautiful. I'm often afraid, but I'm not afraid to be afraid, otherwise it's all scary. But it's more painful to try not to be yourself. People spend a lot of time trying to be somebody else, and I think it leads to terrible diseases. Maybe you get cancer or something. A lot of tough guys die of cancer, have you noticed? John Wayne, Steve McQueen. I think it has something to do – I don't know, I'm no expert – with constantly living or getting trapped in an image or an illusion of themselves, suppressing some part of themselves, whether it's the feminine side or the fearful side.

I'm well aware of that because I come from the macho school of pretense. I was never really a street kid or a tough guy. I used to dress like a Teddy boy and identify with Marlon Brando and Elvis Presley, but I never really was in real street fights or real down-home gangs. I was just a suburban kid, imitating the rockers. But it was a big part of one's life to look tough. I spent the whole of my childhood with shoulders up around the top of me head and me glasses off because glasses were sissy, and walking in complete fear, but with the toughest-looking face you've ever seen. I'd get into trouble just because of the way I looked. I wanted to be this tough James Dean all the time. It took a lot of wrestling to stop doing that, even though

I still fall into it when I get insecure and nervous. I still drop into that I'm-a-street-kid stance, but I have to keep remembering that I never really was one.

That's what Yoko has taught me. I couldn't have done it alone – it had to be a female to teach me. That's it. Yoko has been telling me all the time, "It's all right, it's all right." I look at early pictures of myself, and I was torn between being Marlon Brando and being the sensitive poet – the Oscar Wilde part of me with the velvet, feminine side. I was always torn between the two, mainly opting for the macho side, because if you showed the other side, you were dead.

There's another aspect of your work, which has to do with the way you continually question what's real and what's illusory, such as in "Look at Me," your new "Watching the Wheels" and, of course, "Strawberry Fields Forever," in which you sing, "Nothing is real."

In a way, no thing is real, if you break the word down. As the Hindus or Buddhists say, it's an illusion. It's *Rashomon*. We all see it, but the agreed-upon illusion is what we live in. And the hardest thing is facing yourself.

I used to think that the world was doing it to me and the world owed me something, and that either the conservatives or the socialists or the fascists or the communists or the Christians or the Jews were doing something to me. And when you're a teeny-bopper, that's what you think. But I'm 40 now, and I don't think that anymore, because I found out it doesn't fucking work! The thing goes on anyway, and all you're doing is jacking off, screaming about what your mommy and your daddy did.... But one has to go through that. For the people who even bother to go through that – most assholes just accept what it is anyway and get on with it, right? – but for the few of us who did question what was going on...well, I've found out for me personally – not for the whole world – that I am responsible for me, as well as for them. I am part of them. There's no separation: We're all one, so in that respect I look at it all and think, "Ah, I have to deal with me again in that way. What is real? What is the illusion I'm living or not living?" And I have to deal with it every day. The layers of the onion.

"Looking through a glass onion."

That's what it's about, isn't it?

YOKO NOW COMES INTO THE ROOM to say that she and John have to leave for the Record Plant – the legendary, now-defunct recording studio on West 44th Street where albums like *Electric Ladyland* and *Born to Run* were recorded, and where, for the past couple of weeks, John and Yoko have been remixing some of Yoko's old songs and putting finishing touches on her new single, "Walking on Thin Ice." They'll be working there

throughout the night...and why didn't I join them? It's around 10 p.m. when we leave the Dakota and get into the waiting car. Arriving at the Record Plant a half-hour later, we enter the main studio and are greeted by a sonic blast: Out of the speakers comes the shattering cascade of Yoko's inimitable, primordial voice – intersected by John's forward and backward guitar tracks – screaming out the words "Open your box/Open your trousers/Open your thighs/Open your legs.... Open your ears/Open your nose/Open, open, open, open." And over the next six hours, as two sound engineers and producer Jack Douglas remix a number of Yoko's songs ("Open Your Box," "Kiss Kiss Kiss," "Every Man Has a Woman Who Loves Him"), John and I continue our conversation till four in the morning, by which time Yoko is napping on a studio couch.

* * * * *

Is Yoko thinking of putting out a disco album?

I can't really verify what we're doing yet, because with Yoko, you never know until it's done. But we did come in here to make this string of songs that might go to the rock and disco clubs.

And what about your new songs?

No, because I don't make that stuff [laughs]. I mean, what way could I come back into this game? I came back from where I know best, as unpretentious as possible...and with no experimentation, because I was happy to be doing it as I did it before. My song "Starting Over" – I call it "Elvis-Orbison" [sings: "Only the lonely/Know why I cry/Only the lonely"].

There's a bit of slap-back echo on your recording.

Well, the tape echo is from the Fifties. Almost every record I made had the same echo on it...all the way back to "Rock and Roll Music." I love it. And my voice has always sounded pretty much the same. I'm going right back to the roots of my past. It's like Dylan going to do *Nashville Skyline*. But I don't have any Nashville, being from Liverpool, so I go back to the records I knew, which is Elvis and Roy Orbison and Gene Vincent and Jerry Lee Lewis. I occasionally get tripped off into a "Revolution 9," but my far-out side has been completely encompassed by Yoko.

You know, the first show we did together was at Cambridge University in 1969. She had already been booked to do a concert with some jazz musicians. That was the first time I had appeared un-Beatled. I had an amp and played feedback, and people got very upset because they recognized me: "What's he doing with you?" It's always, "Stay in your bag." So, when she tried to rock, they said, "What's she doing here?" And when I went with her and tried to be the instrument and not project – to just be her band, like a sort of Ike Turner to her Tina, only her Tina was a different,

avant-garde Tina – well, even some of the jazz guys got upset.

Everybody has pictures they want you to live up to. But that's the same as living up to your parents' expectations, or to society's expectations, or to so-called critics who are just guys with a pen or typewriter in a little room, smoking and drinking beer and having their dreams and nightmares, too, but somehow pretending that they're living in a different, separate world. That's all right. But there are people who break out of their bags.

I remember years ago when you and Yoko appeared in bags at a Vienna press conference.

Right. We sang a Japanese folk song in the bags. "Das ist really you, John? John Lennon in zee bag?" Yeah, it's me. "But how do we know ist you?" Because I'm telling you. "Vy don't you come out from this bag?" Because I don't want to come out of the bag. "Don't you realize this is the Hapsburg Palace?" I thought it was a hotel. "Vell, it is now a hotel." They had great chocolate cake in that Vienna hotel, I remember that. Anyway, who wants to be locked in a bag? You have to break out of your bag to keep alive.

[The studio engineers play a tape of Yoko's new song "Walking on Thin Ice."]

Listen to this, Jonathan. We were thinking that this song is so damn good that she should put her own single out, with me on the B side. I'd love to be on the B side of a hit record after all these years. I'd love to be the guitarist – I'm playing backwards guitar on this song. I'd settle for it any day. Yoko deserves it, it's been a long haul. I wouldn't fight about it at all.

Speaking of fighting – and this will make you laugh – Andy Warhol once wanted Yoko and me to wrestle at Madison Square Garden, and he'd film it!

You must be kidding. He wanted you two to wrestle? Maybe a sumo contest!

Anything. Just to show the great "love and peace" people having a good fight onstage – it might have been great!

Do you and Yoko have any plans now, not to fight in public, but maybe to tour together?

I don't know, maybe we will. It could be fun. Can you imagine the two of us now with these new songs... and if we did some of Yoko's early stuff, like "Don't Worry, Kyoko" or "Open Your Box" or "Why" from the Plastic Ono album – it's just her voice and my guitar and one bass and drums, and I hear all those licks coming out now from some of today's groups. So we just might do it. But there will be no smoke bombs, no lipstick, no flashing lights. It has to be just comfy. But we could have a laugh. We're born-again rockers, and we're starting over.

You could also have your own late-night TV show – like "The Captain & Tennille."

Yeah, of course we could. John and Yoko might do it one day. We often talk

about that. It might be fun. But there's time, right? Plenty of time. Right now, here we are in the Record Plant, talking to Jonathan Cott again for ROLLING STONE... and it will be fun to be on the cover of ROLLING STONE. It will be fun, won't it, to start 1981 like 1968?

"Look out, kid/It's somethin' you did/God knows when/But you're doin' it again."

Right. And who's going to be the first to go – Lennon or ROLLING STONE? Who do you think's going to be around the longest? *Life*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Playboy*, *Look*, ROLLING STONE? Let's face it, magazines come and go, record executives come and go, record companies come and go, film producers come and go. Artists come and go too. What a life!

You know, the last album I did before *Double Fantasy* was *Rock 'N' Roll*, with the cover picture of me in Hamburg in a leather jacket. At the end of making that record, I was finishing up a track that Phil Spector had made me sing called "Just Because," which I didn't really know – all the rest of the songs I'd done as a teenager, so I knew them backward – but I couldn't really get the hang of it. At the end of that record – I was mixing it just next door – I started speling and saying, "And so we say farewell from the Record Plant," and a little thing in the back of my mind said, "Are you really saying farewell?" I hadn't thought of it then. I was still separated from Yoko and still hadn't had the baby, but somewhere in the back was a voice that was saying, "Are you saying farewell to the whole game?"

It just flashed by like that – like a premonition. I didn't think of it until a few years later, when I realized that I had actually stopped recording. I came across the cover photo – the original picture of me in my leather jacket, leaning against the wall in Hamburg in 1961 – and I thought, "Is this it? Do I stop where I came in, with 'Be-Bop-A-Lula'?" The day I first met Paul, I was singing that song for the first time onstage. There's a photo in all the Beatles books – a picture of me with a checked shirt on, holding a little acoustic guitar – and I'm singing "Be-Bop-A-Lula," just as I did on that album.

It was like this little thing, and there was no consciousness in it. It was only much later, when I started thinking about it... you know, like sometimes you dream – it's like a premonition, but this was an awake premonition. I had no plans, no intention, but I thought, "What is this, this cover photo from Hamburg, this 'Be-Bop-A-Lula,' this saying goodbye from the Record Plant?" And I was actually really saying goodbye since it was the last track of the *Rock 'N' Roll* album – and I was so glad to get it over with – and it was also the end of the album.

It's like when a guy in England, an astrologer, once told me that I was going to not live in England. And I didn't remem-


ber that until I was in the middle of my immigration fight to stay in this country, and when I thought, "What the hell am I doing here? Why the hell am I going through this?" I didn't plan to live here, it just happened. There was no packing the bags – we left everything at our house in England, we were just coming for a short visit... but we never went back.

I was in court, and people were saying I wasn't good enough to be here or that I was a communist or whatever the hell it was. So I thought, "What am I doing this for?" And then I remembered that astrologer in London telling me, "One day you'll live abroad." Not because of taxes. The story was that I left for tax reasons, but I didn't. I got no benefit, nothing, I screwed up completely, I lost money when I left. So I had no reason to leave England. I'm not a person who looks for the sun like a lot of the English who like to get away to the South of France, or go to Malta or Spain or Portugal. George was always talking about "Let's all go and live in the sun."

"Here Comes the Sun."

Right, he's always looking for the sun because he's still living in England... And then it clicked on me, "Jesus, that guy predicted I was going to leave England!" Though at the time he said that to me, I was thinking, "Are you kidding?"

Sometimes you wonder, I mean really wonder. I know we make our own reality, and we always have a choice, but how much is preordained? Is there always a fork in the road, and are there two preordained paths that are equally preordained? There could be hundreds of paths where one could go this way or that way – there's a choice, and it's very strange sometimes.

And that's a good ending for our interview. Goodbye, till next time. 

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DRAGON TATTOO

[Cont. from 109] exclusion complex. She knows nobody and has no social skills whatsoever."

Instead of being endowed with physical strength, Salander is a hacker magician. With a few keystrokes on her laptop, she can access every piece of information in the world. But the parallels between Lisbeth Salander and Pippi Longstocking are gestural at best. When he tried to explain the main character of his novels to his brother, Larsson reached for a closer analogy.

"She's like Therese," he said.

WHEN THERESE LARSSON WAS growing up, she saw her uncle as a heroic figure. Whenever he visited from Stockholm he would tell her stories about the terrifying adventures he had while hitchhiking through Africa, about the time that a gang of Nazis had jumped him outside of a Stockholm restaurant or the time an assassin had waited for him outside his office. When the stories became too scary, her mother sent her to bed. But she would tiptoe to the door of the living room and sit there, listening to the sound of his voice.

Larsson didn't visit Umeå often – he always had an excuse about a deadline that needed to be met. But he corresponded regularly with his niece by e-mail, Therese sending short notes and receiving what seemed to her like novel-length responses. He was an adult she could confide in, a role model and teacher who wasn't a parent, with whom she could discuss life as a teenager in Umeå. She appreciated that he was honest with her. He disapproved, for instance, when she told him that she had moved in with her high school boyfriend.

"You're too young," he told her. "A girl your age should be using boys like toys."

She laughed.

"It's OK," he said. "You know how to take care of yourself."

He didn't fault her for taking a job as a nurse's aide instead of applying to college. And he made no comment when she showed him the large rose that she had tattooed on her shoulder. That she chose a rose, however, was surprising. When she was young, she had often said that she would get a tattoo of a dragon.

In the two years Larsson spent writing his novels, he often e-mailed Therese to ask her questions about her life: what she thought about, what she would do in certain situations. She told him about her struggles with anorexia and about her passion for kickboxing; she had been taking lessons since she was 15. (Before that, she had studied jujitsu for eight years.) He had always loved how she dressed as a teenager – black makeup, black leather jacket, black boots.

"Lisbeth Salander is like you," Larsson told her. "Soft on the outside, but harder inside."

When Therese turned 20, she decided to go with her boyfriend to Stockholm. She wanted to introduce him to her uncle. They made plans, but at the last minute Larsson had to cancel – he was on deadline. He asked her to wait a little longer, but they had to catch the plane back to Umeå. He apologized profusely, and they agreed to make plans to see each other again soon. He died two months later.

Therese, now 26, lives with a new boyfriend. She still wears black, but her tastes run more to Björn Borg's casual-clothing line than to the gothic punk favored by Lisbeth Salander, and she has let her short brown hair grow out. She has a broad smile and a low, joyful laugh, which makes an appearance whenever she talks about her kickboxing class. She's quite accomplished: She knows how to smash a block of wood with her fist and, she says, how to smash the boys in her class.

Her father encourages her to apply to college, and her friends encourage her

"Everyone knows about Stieg now," says his editor. "He's a phenomenon, like Abba or Ikea."

to be certified as a registered nurse. But after so many people close to her died – her mother, who died of pancreatic cancer three years ago, her uncle, and her ex-boyfriend, who committed suicide – she is happy to be in a comfortable, safe place, still working as a nurse's aide at the local hospital. "I like to take care of people and have people around me," she says.

I ask if she's ever tempted to request some of her uncle's money – millions of krona that could be made readily available to her, just as it is to Salander in the novels.

"I don't think about it," she says. "I have enough money to buy food. I don't need any more."

Her uncle's celebrity has put her in odd situations, especially since strangers don't suspect she's related – Larsson is a common Swedish surname. One day, while Therese was making her rounds at the hospital, an interview with her father and grandfather came on the television. The host talked about how many millions of krona the Larsson family had inherited from the Millennium trilogy.

"Hey, Therese," said one of the patients. "What's your last name?"

"Larsson," she said.

"Ha! You could be related to him!"

"Yeah," she said. "I am."

The patients chuckled and turned back to the television. Therese took a deep breath and went back to changing their bedpans.

IN THE SIX YEARS SINCE HIS DEATH, Stieg Larsson has become what he always aspired to be: a bestselling writer who blends the passions of political journalism with the fantastical tales of his youth. "Everyone knows about Stieg Larsson now," says his editor, Eva Gedin. "He's a phenomenon, like Abba or Ikea."

She's right – but not all of his friends have capitalized on Larsson's sudden fame. Per Jarl was one of Larsson's closest friends and the journalist who got him hired at TT. He has never spoken with a reporter about his friend.

Jarl couldn't read the books for several years, worried it would be like hearing a ghost; finally he listened to them on CD. He was struck by the deeper themes that were embedded in the classic conventions of the crime thriller. In particular, the obsessive crusade that had always driven his friend: Larsson's hatred of violent neo-Nazis – and of all men who subjugate women and find ways to abuse them at every turn. "The important thing," Jarl tells me several times, "is to understand that there is a very serious thing that Stieg was fighting for."

It's a windy, gray day, and we are walking in Kungsholmen, not far from *Expo's* offices.

Jarl is still stunned by Larsson's success. "One of your closest friends tells you he's written some crime novels – what are you supposed to think?" he says. "Then he dies, and becomes a celebrity. I'm a journalist, I understand how it works – the hype, the people making money off him. But it's bizarre."

Then, right before we part, he comes to an abrupt halt in the street and grabs my shoulder.

"Everybody's talking about the fourth book," he says. "Does it exist, what is it about? For me, it's very clear what the fourth book is. The fourth book started the day he died: It's everything that's happened afterward, all this fucking mess, all the rumors." Jarl shakes his head.

"We don't need a fourth book," he says. "The fourth book is happening right now."

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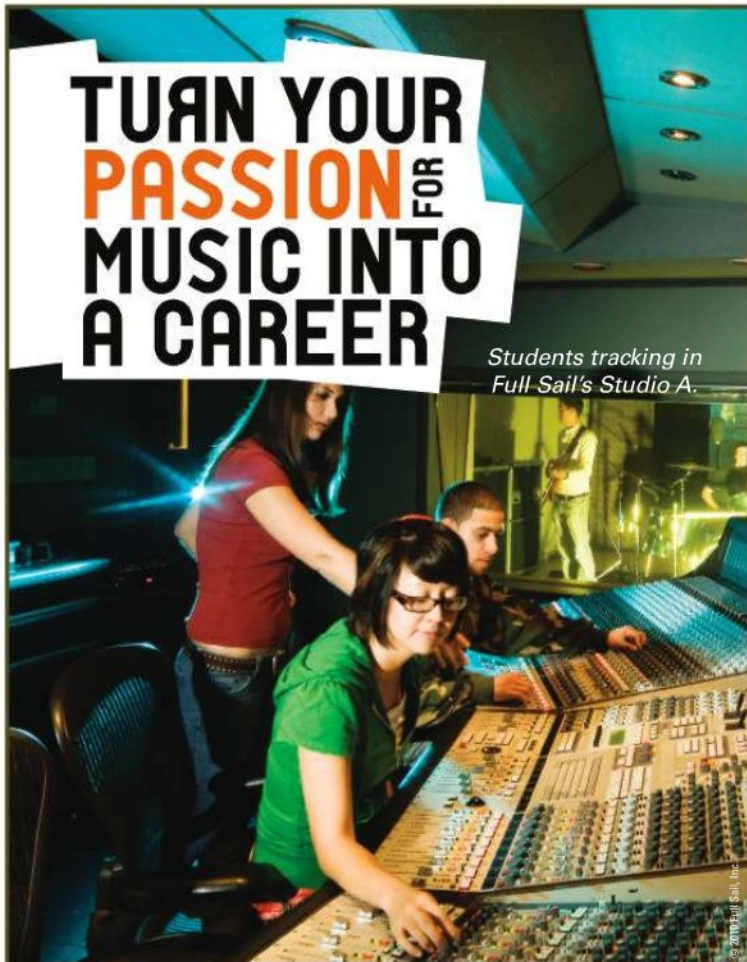
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iTUNES TOP 10 SONGS

- Katy Perry**
"Firework" - Capitol
- Pink**
"Raise Your Glass" - LaFace
- Ke\$ha**
"We R Who We R" - Kemosabe/RCA
- Black Eyed Peas**
"The Time (Dirty Bit)" - Interscope
- Rihanna**
"What's My Name?" - Def Jam
- Bruno Mars**
"Grenade" - Elektra
- Rihanna**
"Only Girl (In the World)" - Def Jam
- Bruno Mars**
"Just the Way You Are" - Elektra
- Far East Movement**
"Like a G6" - Cherrytree/Interscope
- Trey Songz**
"Bottoms Up" - Songbook/Atlantic

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COLLEGE RADIO TOP 10 ALBUMS

- Matt and Kim**
Sidewalks - Fader
- Sufjan Stevens**
The Age of Adz - Asthmatic Kitty
- Belle and Sebastian**
Write About Love - Matador
- Deerhunter**
Halcyon Digest - 4AD
- Brian Eno**
Small Craft on a Milk Sea - Warp
- Elvis Costello**
National Ransom - Hear
- Pomegranates**
One of Us - Afternoon
- Cee Lo Green**
The Lady Killer - Elektra
- Kings of Leon**
Come Around Sundown - RCA
- Of Montreal**
False Priest - Polyvinyl



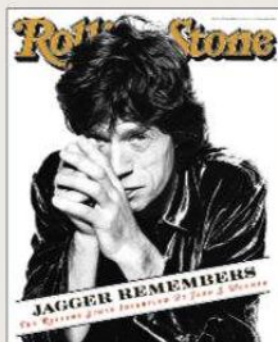
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From the Vault

RS 723, December 14th, 1995

TOP 10 SINGLES

- Mariah Carey and Boyz II Men**
"One Sweet Day" - Columbia
- Whitney Houston**
"Exhale (Shoop Shoop)" - Arista
- LL Cool J**
"Hey Lover" - Def Jam
- Mariah Carey**
"Fantasy" - Columbia
- Coolio**
"Gangsta's Paradise" - MCA Soundtracks
- Madonna**
"You'll See" - Maverick/Sire
- TLC**
"Diggin' on You" - LaFace
- R. Kelly**
"You Remind Me of Something" - Jive
- Goo Goo Dolls**
"Name" - Warner
- Janet Jackson**
"Runaway" - A&M



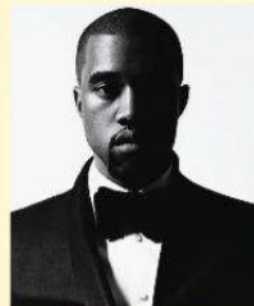
On the Cover

"With all this attention, you become a child. You can't talk about anything apart from your own experience, your own dopey life. I'd rather do something that can get me out of the center of attention. But there's no way, really, to avoid that."

—Mick Jagger

Top 40 Albums

- Kanye West**
My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy - Roc-A-Fella/Def Jam
- Nicki Minaj**
Pink Friday - Young Money/Cash Money/Universal Motown
- Susan Boyle**
The Gift - SYCO/Columbia
- Taylor Swift**
Speak Now - Big Machine
- Jackie Evancho**
O Holy Night - SYCO/Columbia
- Rihanna**
Loud - Def Jam
- Justin Bieber**
My Worlds Acoustic - RBMG/Island
- My Chemical Romance**
Danger Days: The True Lives of the Fabulous Killjoys - Reprise
- Ne-Yo**
Libra Scale - Def Jam
- Glee: The Music**
The Christmas Album - 20th Century Fox TV/Columbia
- Kid Rock**
Born Free - Top Dog/Atlantic
- Josh Groban**
Illuminations - 143/Reprise
- Rascal Flatts**
Nothing Like This - Big Machine
- Keith Urban**
Get Closer - Capitol Nashville
- Ke\$ha**
Cannibal - Kemosabe/RCA
- Katy Perry**
Teenage Dream - Capitol
- Sugarland**
The Incredible Machine - Mercury Nashville
- Burlesque**
Soundtrack - RCA
- Chris Tomlin**
Glory in the Highest: Christmas Songs of Worship - Sixsteps
- NOW 36**
Various Artists - Universal/EMI/Sony Music
- Justin Bieber**
My World 2.0 - RBMG/Island
- Jason Aldean**
My Kinda Party - Broken Bow
- Lady Antebellum**
Need You Now - Capitol Nashville
- Bon Jovi**
Greatest Hits - Island
- Eminem**
Recovery - Aftermath/Interscope
- Lloyd Banks**
H.F.M. 2 (Hunger for More 2) - G Unit
- Josh Groban**
Noel - 143/Reprise
- Mariah Carey**
Merry Christmas II You - Island
- Pink**
Greatest Hits... So Far!!! - LaFace
- Selena Gomez and the Scene**
A Year Without Rain - Hollywood
- Lil Wayne**
I Am Not a Human Being - Cash Money/Universal Motown
- Andrea Bocelli**
My Christmas - Sugar
- NOW That's What I Call Christmas! 4**
Various Artists - EMI/Universal/Sony Music
- Chris Tomlin**
And If Our God Is for Us... - Sixsteps
- Kings of Leon**
Come Around Sundown - RCA
- Bruno Mars**
Doo-Wops & Hooligans - Elektra
- Alan Jackson**
34 Number Ones - Arista Nashville
- Mumford and Sons**
Sigh No More - Glassnote
- Nelly**
5.0 - Derrty/Universal Motown
- Kenny Chesney**
Hemingway's Whiskey - BNA



'Runaway' Success

Kanye's guerrilla media blitz - which included giving away half of his LP online - worked in his favor: His fifth album debuted with 496,000 copies sold.



Darling Nicki

Free mixtapes and guest cameos helped Minaj's debut LP sell 375,000 copies in its first week - the second-best debut for a female rapper ever.



Bieber Strips Down

Bieber's acoustic EP - nine old cuts and one new track - is available only at Walmart. It sold 115,000 copies for his third Top 10 debut in just over a year.



Ke\$ha Don't \$top

Less than a year after her debut, Ke\$ha has a new nine-song EP. Fueled by the Number One hit "We R Who We R," it sold 74,000 copies its first week.

00 Chart position on Dec. 1st, 2010
00 Chart position on Nov. 24th, 2010
NEW New Entry
2ND Re-Entry
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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: FABIAN MONTIQUE; GL WOOD; PAMELA LITTKY; JASON SHELTON; PATRICK HEAGNEY; ANDREW MACPHERSON

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